



# Half Century Messages

TO

Pastors and People

*By*

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## FOREWORD



My reason for offering the following papers for publication is the importance of the subjects presented. They are none of them new, but, as I believe, are not as fully and as frequently introduced in public discourse, and in Church literature as their relation to Christian life demands. No attempt has been made to discuss any of the topics exhaustively; I have the hope that they are presented suggestively. If the book shall help some to greater expectations of faith, and others to deeper searchings of heart, the prayer of the author will be answered.

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"Get up freshly ; open your mouth widely ; have done quickly."—Martin Luther.

"The great need of Methodism is, not less fire but more learning."—Bishop Simpson.

"The ministry should never be entered upon when a man could conscientiously turn to something else."—Buckley.

"Avoid all affectation. A preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all."—Methodist Discipline. "Will you endeavor not to speak too long or too loud?"—Methodist Discipline until 1880.

"God works with broken reeds. If a man conceives himself to be an iron pillar, God can do nothing with or by him. All the self-conceit and self-confidence has to be taken out of him first."—Maclaren.

"The first problem in oratory is to get rid of insincerity, to put on manliness and truth; to show plainly that every statement is thoroughly believed by the preacher."—Anon.

"Do not please the devil by preaching too long or too loud, but please God by denying yourself therein. The whole service should begin and end in about an hour, unless sometimes on Sunday morning, when you may probably lengthen the service a little."—Wesley to Adam Clarke.

"Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary." "Do we not loiter away many hours in every week? Each try himself. No idleness is consistent with growth in grace. Nay, without exactness in redeeming time you can not retain the grace you received in justification."—Methodist Discipline.

## I.

### SOME CAUSES OF MINISTERIAL UNACCEPT- ABleness.

“Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?”—Acts xix, 15.

FROM an observation of several years, we note the following as among the causes of ministerial unacceptableness, so far as the causes have existed in ministers themselves:

I. *An appearance of indolence.* (1) Physical indolence—waste of time in unnecessary or trifling matters; neglect of preaching from house to house; spending much time in a few homes, supposed to be specially agreeable, and little or none in many others; performing ministerial duties generally in an indifferent or perfunctory manner. (2) Mental indolence,—seen in stale or unstudied sermons, and threadbare illustrations. In narrowness of thought, and lack of variety. In loss of creative or in-

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ventive power in sermonizing, and in consequent tendency to hobbyism. In failure to carry out any system of daily study.

2. *Affectation.* Seen in the conscious or unconscious imitation of some other person in voice or manner. In having a voice or tone in the pulpit which is unnatural, and which the preacher uses nowhere but in the pulpit. It is seen in the effort to speak at all times in the language and with the gestures appropriate to a climax only. Among its most hurtful manifestations is the simulating of deep feeling—a manufactured tremor of the voice, and an effort to command tears which are not prompted by depth of solicitude nor suggested by the point in hand. The learned and the unlearned will with equal readiness interpret this as practicing upon their emotions. His manners will be most acceptable who is *strictly himself*. Tears and quivering lips are never offensive when they are begotten of deep convictions, and brought forth in the painful apprehension of the interests involved. They are never normal when they become habitual.

3. *From all that is artificial in the pulpit, congregations will recoil.* They expect it in

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the theater; they despise it in the pulpit. Artificial excitement, however generated, is only loss to the preacher of the gospel. It may produce a temporary ease in speech, though this result is by no means certain. It generally leads to extravagance in expression and exaggeration in statement. The average hearer will quickly distinguish between this man-made unction and the fervor of a soul moved by the Holy Spirit. It savors of insincerity. It weakens conviction in the preacher, and leads his hearers to regard his manner as a pretense. There is a homely jingle which runs thus:

“Begin low;  
Proceed slow;  
Take fire;  
Rise higher;  
Be self-possessed  
When most impressed.”

This was once repeated in the presence of a number of ministers, to which a lady responded, addressing herself to her husband: “Now, my dear, I see what is your trouble; you rise higher before you take fire.”

4. *Want of sustained ministerial spirit.*  
When the minister is one man in the pulpit and

quite another out of it, he will not long be acceptable to his most thoughtful hearers. If after presenting important truth with apparent seriousness, he throws himself at once into a trifling attitude, the good effect of his sermon is lost, and he will be regarded by many as a make-believe. In a consciously sustained consecration, the man is always the minister.

5. *Want of refinement in manners* has sometimes rendered ministers unacceptable. Untidiness in personal appearance, engaging in conversation which parents would prefer that their children should not hear. Egotism, displayed in demanding special consideration from the homes which they visit, subjecting their hosts to additional labor for their convenience. Treating advice or friendly criticism as offensive. Monopolizing the conversation of the social circle by talking principally of themselves. Indulging in habits which are offensive to persons of good taste. No minister has any reason to expect to be acceptable to an intelligent congregation who uses tobacco in any form, either in his study or out of it.

6. *A selfish ambition* has rendered some ministers unacceptable to their Churches.

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When they exhibit dissatisfaction with their fields of labor, and are looking and longing for something more to their liking, they will soon become unacceptable. When they seek the advertising of the newspapers, and court the favor of the world at the expense of their Churches; when they become prominent in their connection with outside societies, and seem ready to accept anything which will bring them a higher salary than they receive as ministers, is it any wonder that they are unacceptable? When they carry with them the spirit of complaint, preach funereal sermons the year around; when they criticise severely those whom they regard as more favored than themselves, and exhibit on all occasions an undertone of discontent, it is time they were unacceptable.

7. *The want of serious cheerfulness.* There is an extreme reserve which is understood to mean haughtiness or indifference towards others. There is a self-absorption which fails to see and properly greet all classes. There is a religious self-consciousness which borders upon Pharisaism, and there is a morbid righteousness, a legalism which is cold and cynical.



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Any of these types in a minister will render him unacceptable. Martin Luther's rendering of Matt. vi, 16, is suggestive, "Thou shalt not look sour." A good advice to ministers for all days as well as those of fasting. A good man once said of his minister: "I think our pastor is anointed, but I am afraid it was done with vinegar."

8. Preachers have been unacceptable from *a manifest lack in education*. Bad English in the pulpit; singulars and plurals hitched together; modes, tenses, and persons indiscriminately mixed; carelessness in historical references, and blunders in scientific allusions. Worse still when a minister indulges in a wholesale berating of science and scientists, as if they were the worst enemies of God and man, and talks of the Holy Spirit as though spiritual power could be best realized along with ignorance and laziness. Indiscriminate denunciation of "higher criticism" from the pulpit has prejudiced more people against Christian teaching, and disgusted more thinking men with ministers, than all that is called higher criticism.

9. *Long sermons* have made ministers un-

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acceptable. Much of the criticism upon long sermons may be unreasonable, but it is true that few men are able to hold the attention of an audience for an hour. If the sermon is made long by repetitions of the same thoughts in different language, by the multiplication of adjectives, or by illustrations made wearisome by minute detail, it will seem to the hearers to be excruciatingly long. If the preacher thinks that the exhaustive treatment of his subject is of more importance than the continued interest of his hearers, he will soon become unacceptable. If he stops just when his audience wishes him to go on, they will not lose their interest in his sermons.

10. *Irreverence* on the part of ministers has rendered some unacceptable. When they use the name of God with unnecessary frequency, and with a familiarity which to some seems to savor of profanity; when they inject into their discourse, "for heaven's sake," "for God's sake," etc., they are shocking the feelings of some of their devout worshippers. Saying queer things, playing off puns with Scripture language, repeating stories which excite laughter,—these may win them the applause

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of the rabble, but by their thoughtful hearers they will be regarded as unbecoming a messenger of Christ.

II. *The home life* of the minister has much to do with his acceptability. If the relations of the members of the family are unpleasant; if there is ill temper in the atmosphere of the home; if there is no family government, or if the government is of a harsh and legal type; if the piety of the home is superficial or Pharisaic, and if the preacher is better everywhere else than in his home, he will be justly unacceptable.

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."—Peter.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."—Paul.

"It is no more the duty of the boy to study physiology, in order that he may know how to train each member of his body to perform its part, than it is for each member of the Church to study the needs of the times, that he, as a member of Christ's body, may know how to do his duty."—Rev. A. G. Upton.

"What would Christ have accomplished had He come from heaven every morning, brought His lunch, and gone home at night? It was because He dwelt among men, and was one of us, that He won our hearts. So the Church must not strain out a congenial class. It must not skim the pool; it must dip to the bottom, even to the miry bottom of society. It must embrace all if it is to save all."—Parkhurst.

"Some who consider themselves reasonable men will set a whole Church in a blaze about the merest trifle. Meeting after meeting will be called, and angry discussions provoked, and holy work overturned about the smallest mistake of a preacher, or the minutest fault of a deacon. Societies which were doing great service have been broken up by the whims of good brethren, who made much ado about nothing, and did great harm in trying to do a little good."—Spurgeon.

"The times demand Church members who are loyal to principle. The devil no longer goes about, seeking whom he may devour; he has found that the roaring business puts people on their guard. He has put away the smell of the forest, and taken on the perfume of the city. He comes in stylish and insinuating forms to entice from moral rectitude. The world is cutting the corners on all moral questions. The times demand Church members who stand four-square and straight-edged on all those questions."—Rev. A. G. Upton.

## II.

### GOOD CHURCH MEMBERS.

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.”—Rom. xii, 5.

THE apostle compares the mutual relations of Christians to those of the different members of the human body. All together they constitute one body, and each in his proper place serves the interest of the whole. He evidently believed in Church organization—“congregations of faithful men” and women—and he evidently knew the great value of piety, and of harmonious activity on the part of Church members.

Now there are good people in the world who are better Christians than they are Church members. They mean well, but seem incapable of blending their lives and efforts with others. It must be admitted also that there are others who, in some respects, are better Church mem-

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bers than they are Christians. The deficiencies in both these classes are much to be regretted; the Churches are all in need of members who possess that most excellent combination of qualifications,—spiritual life joined with efficiency in the duties of Church membership.

### I. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD CHURCH MEMBERS.

1. *Good Church members are, first of all, Christians.* They are repentant and regenerate, and hence possess some degree of spiritual life. They aim to be right with God and man, and while it is true that some who are thus Christian are not the best of Church members, the fact of Christian experience and character must be put down as the most essential and fundamental qualification for Church membership. All other endowments of mind or estate can not constitute a good Church member in the absence of these. Great defects and many blunders will be regretted, and at the same time overlooked, in professed Christians if the evidences of a consecrated life and a Christ-like spirit are recognized. Gifts, learning, liberality and professions do not in themselves

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make a good Church member in the absence of solid piety.

2. *Good Church members will place great value upon their Church relations.* They will appreciate the fact that, with all its faults and shortcomings, the Church is a divine institution, and includes the best of earth. They will treat their connection with it as an exalted privilege, and they will hold as sacred the responsibilities arising out of their membership. They will regard their Church homes as next in value to their own family circles, and the obligations of their Church covenants as binding as their marriage vows. They will not remain in the Church to dishonor it, nor separate themselves from it for trivial reasons. They will seek in all legitimate ways to preserve the good name, and increase the influence of the Churches into the fellowship of which they have been received.

3. *Good Church members have right motives in uniting with the Church.* They do not join the Church altogether for what they hope to receive from it. They do not come into the Church as into a railroad train, in order to secure transportation to some desirable destina-



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tion. They may well desire to place themselves and their families in the fellowship and under the watch-care of the Church, but they will also have the higher purpose of helping as they may in the work of the Church for the benefit of the world. They take their places in the Church in order to be where Christ wants them, and in order to render to His cause the most effective service. They join the Church for the purpose of bringing their homes under the best possible influences, and to unite their efforts with others in promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the most effective way. They wish to be in line with gracious means, and to stand with others where Christian character and life are expected of them.

4. *Good Church members will seek to inform themselves concerning the Church—its history, its doctrines, and its work in the world.* They will study Christian movements to “note what God is doing in the world.” They will give some time to the study of the Bible, a duty never more needful to the Christian believer than now, and as opportunity allows, they will read up in Christian literature. Fathers and mothers will see that their homes are furnished

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with the productions of those who think well and write well upon religious themes. The religious paper will be brought in as an educational necessity in the family. Good Church members will give to their children the best educational advantages within their power in order to fit them for the highest and widest usefulness, and as far as possible they will select Christian schools for the education of their sons and daughters.

5. *The business and citizen life of good Church members is religious.* They will be as truly religious in the store, the shop, and the counting-room, as in the Church or the prayer-meeting. They will regard themselves as representing the Church everywhere and at all times. Their politics will be Christian politics. They recognize the fact that they are as really witnesses for Christ in one place as another, and that what they say and do in their daily intercourse with their fellow-men constitutes the chief element in their influence for or against religion.

6. *Those who rightly regard the responsibilities of Church membership will maintain a consecrated social life.* A social life they will

have and should have; it is in the arrangement of God. It furnishes large opportunities of good, and equally large possibilities of evil. It is by the tone and manner of their social life that the piety of Christian people is most frequently judged. It is here that they either gain or lose religious influence over others. Those who make the governing motive of their social life that of personal pleasure only are not good Church members. They can not be true to their Church till they aim at doing good, and honoring Christ in this as in all other departments of life.

7. *To be good Church members Christians must consecrate their gifts.* The "spiritual gifts"<sup>1</sup> of the New Testament have their counterpart in those now in the Church. Some have by nature the gift of "teaching,"<sup>2</sup> and this native gift is quickened by an experience of saving grace. Some are blest with marked ability in public discourse—they can "prophesy."<sup>3</sup> The gifts of others are in "exhortation," or in "ruling."<sup>4</sup> To others is given ability in financiering, quite above that of their brethren, and they are to "wait on their min-

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vs. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* vs. 8.

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istry.”<sup>5</sup> Whatever the gift, whether its rank be that of one talent or five or ten, there is a place for it in the Church, and it will render substantial benefit to the cause of Christ if it be constantly offered to Him in willing service. Every Church member should study to know his own gift, and not idly covet that of another. He should “stir up the gift of God which is in him,”<sup>6</sup> not envying his brother his more conspicuous endowments, and neither neglecting nor boasting of his own.

8. *All Church members who meet their obligations will avoid individualism.* They will not regard their duty as always marked out by their technical rights, or their personal preferences. They will not always insist upon having their own views carried out, nor upon having their own advices heeded. They will not become sour and turn their backs upon the Church in case others have their way instead of themselves. Up to the point of conscientious convictions they will waive what is personal to themselves in order to act with their brethren. They will do all in their power to preserve harmony in the life of the Church, and

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<sup>5</sup> Rom. xii, 7.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. i, 16.

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will sacrifice to the last degree rather than become the occasion of a Church quarrel. No man, however rich, and no minister, however gifted, is worth the cost of a Church strife.

9. *A good Church member will do all in his power to protect the good name of his Church.* He will seek in all legitimate ways to increase its influence. He will not tolerate known iniquity in its members, but he will not be hasty in believing evil of his brethren. He will "support the weak, and be patient towards all men."<sup>7</sup> He will not impugn the motives nor harshly criticise the conduct of those who differ from him. He will not "think of himself more highly than he ought to think."<sup>8</sup>

10. *A good Church member will, as far as possible, sustain all the services of his Church.* He will not neglect them because the pastor happens not to be the man he wanted, nor because he thinks some members of the Church have wronged him, or have slighted him or his family. He will not attend Church for the entertainment which he can get out of the service, nor will he insist that the preacher shall always preach upon the subjects concerning

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Thes. v, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. xii, 3

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which he is most pleased to hear. He will not find fault with the pastor if he does not hear his own belief exactly stated and defended in every sermon. He will go to Church to worship God with his fellow Christians, and to sustain by his presence and his offerings an institution ordained of God for the salvation of men. He will brave some bad weather, and subject himself to some degree of hardship and inconvenience in order to be with his brethren in Sunday and mid-week services. He will "contribute of his earthly substance, according to his ability, to the support of the Gospel and the various benevolent enterprises of the Church."<sup>9</sup> He will never stay away from a service from the anticipation of a public collection. In a word, *good Church members are just all-around Christians.*

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<sup>9</sup> Methodist Discipline.



"Increase appointments for public meetings *only as there is demand* for them. Have the interest compel the meetings, and do not appoint extra meetings to get up interest."—Rev. Herrick Johnson.

"Opposition or neglect of needed reforms will prevent revivals of religion. The Holy Spirit is a reformer, and where Churches will not co-operate in the promotion of greatly needed reforms, they need not expect a revival of religion."—Finney.

"There are special harvest seasons in the spiritual as in the natural world—times of great ingathering when, as round about Ephesus, mightily grows the Word of God and prevails."—Revivals, Their Place and Their Power.

"It is a mistake to suppose that aggressive spiritual work can be successfully accomplished by setting apart a few weeks in the year for it, without the most careful preparation for it during the rest of the time. Yet this is largely the habit."—Perren's Revival Sermons.

"Be watchful against placing dependence on a protracted meeting, as if that of itself would produce a revival. This is a point of great danger, and has always been so. This is the great reason why the Church in successive generations has always had to give up her measures, because Christians had come to rely upon them for success."—Finney's Lectures.



"Among the evils to be avoided is *the recognition of any particular ministers or class of ministers as revivalists*. There is no such distinctive class known to the New Testament. It is giving countenance among the people to the idea that certain ministers on wheels have a kind of monopoly of the Holy Spirit, and can command His services on call. It is disturbing and dishonoring to the pastorate."

"Avoid the notion that any excitement is pernicious and is therefore to be studiously resisted. There *is* an excitement that is wholly or chiefly animal. It is not grounded in rational conviction. It is fostered by rubbing of hands, tones of voice, chorus of song, affecting stories, mere hortatory appeals and social bodily contact. It can be worked up any day in a crowd by a skillful leader."—*Revivals, Their Place and Power*.

"Avoid adopting the idea that a revival can not be enjoyed without a protracted meeting. Some Churches have got into a morbid state of feeling on this subject. Their zeal has become all spasmodic and feverish, so that they never think of doing anything to promote a revival only in that way. When a protracted meeting is held, they will seem to be wonderfully zealous, and then sink into a torpid state until another protracted meeting produces another spasm."—*Perren's Revival Sermons*, p. 50.

### III.

#### THE UNSATISFACTORINESS OF SOME REVIVAL EFFORTS.

“Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?”—Matt. xvii, 19.

REVIVAL efforts have frequently proved unsatisfactory and disappointing. This has been true at least of many in quite recent years. (1) In that they have failed to bring to the services, in any considerable numbers, the non-Christian elements of communities. (2) In the small numbers of conversions among those who have attended. (3) Unsatisfactory in the fact that the work has often proved transient rather than permanent. (4) In that the feature of *personal reformation of life* has not followed such efforts in the degree which revival promises. (5) In that such efforts have sometimes closed, leaving the Churches no more spiritual or influential for good than

when they were commenced. (6) In that they have sometimes produced in Churches and communities a feeling of prejudice against what are called revival meetings.

I. SOME CAUSES OF THE UNSATISFACTORINESS OF CERTAIN REVIVAL EFFORTS.

I. They have sometimes been ill timed. Revival, meaning by that term a general religious awakening in the Church and community, is a spiritual harvest. It follows the work of planting and cultivating. It is an ingathering of the results of faithful preaching, as well as much personal work on the part of pastor and people. Where the preaching has been of a character to please and entertain, rather than to produce conviction; when those who should have been active workers have been indifferent or religiously idle, the time for harvesting has not come. Revival efforts begun without regard to conditions are likely to fail of satisfactory results. Such an effort on the part of a Church is a matter of too serious moment to be toyed with as an experiment, or to be commenced and ended by the phases of the moon, or the pressure of business.

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2. Genuine revival is the work of the Holy Spirit in and through human agency. Ministers and other Christian workers are not "mere instruments" in this work; they are co-agents. Perfection in the work of the human agents is not to be expected, but it is all important that they seek just what the Holy Spirit seeks. If worldly, selfish, or unworthy aims are allowed to enter into revival efforts, they correspondingly fail of the Spirit's presence. It is well to seek converts; but if this be done chiefly to add to a Church rather than to save the lost, the movement is out of sympathy with Christ, and must be wanting in Divine energy. A misguided sentiment has sometimes demanded of ministers a reputation as successful revivalists. Under this pressure the temptation to aim at building up such a reputation is very great. Churches have sometimes looked upon revival efforts as the means of carrying them up to the point of paying off Church debts, building new edifices, or enabling them to offer increased salaries. In revival efforts, whatever alloys the motives of minister or people with a self-regarding aim, to that extent renders the movement worldly and weak. "We

are workers together with God.”<sup>1</sup> We are to seek the end which He seeks. *We are to seek this end for the same reason that He seeks it.* This makes room for God.

3. We fear that in some revival efforts the secret of failure has been in the fact that the Holy Spirit has been dishonored. He has not, excepting in theory, been sufficiently relied upon as the all-essential in the work. Have we not treated Him as an impersonal influence, rather than as the Personal God? Have we not treated Him as distant, rather than as always present? Have we not entreated Him to come and help us do *our work*, instead of asking Him to receive our service in the accomplishment of *His work*? Do we not place reliance upon the abilities, the reputation, the gifts, or the tactics of men which we should place upon the Spirit of God only? In the Church as in the Nation, when we have “the man who can do it,” the man fails us. “The Egyptians are still men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.”<sup>2</sup> False trusts are but the reverse side of unbelief; they are

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vi, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxxi, 3.

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equally effectual in preventing the many mighty works of Jesus.

4. Certain methods of advertising revival-meetings have been unfavorable to their highest success. The use of the newspapers has been often carried to an unhealthful extreme. When this plan has descended to the thin art of "puffing," it has usually awakened the suspicion of self-glorying or of insincerity. Announcements of special attractions in music, and of the expected presence of distinguished persons who are to take part, may for a few times gather the crowd, but it will be a crowd already prejudiced by the feeling that a plan is laid for catching them. All such attractions are in the end generally distractions, and often detractions. A crowd is not absolutely indispensable to a successful revival effort, but confidence in the simplicity and purity of the motives which guide the movement is essential to real success. Concentration of thought upon the truth which leads men to know themselves sinners, and Christ as a Savior, is first of all to be desired. The attempt to awaken and save men by attractive indirections generally dissipates religious feeling, and diverts the thought

from the very truths which the revival meeting is supposed most deeply to impress.

5. "Altar services" are venerable for their age and usefulness in revival efforts. They are still to some extent helpful. But it is also evident that the more common methods of conducting these services are regarded by increasing numbers as in some respects unwise and unprofitable. (1) In some Churches their frequency, and the fact that they are attended with little or no apparent result, have served to destroy their meaning, and greatly to impair their effectiveness as special means. (2) "Coming to the altar" is sometimes treated as a universal test of penitence. Those who respond to the invitation and come forward, are accepted, without further evidence, as penitents, while those who decline the invitation are treated as willfully rejecting Christ. We do not think that the leaders of altar services generally mean all this, but they often leave this impression upon their audiences. The effect of this is unfortunate in the extreme. It may not be wholly pride or conscious impenitence which leads some persons to decline the invitation to the altar. There are those who think they have

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reasons for remaining outside the usual exercises of the altar service. And if the pastor or the evangelist conveys the impression that a refusal to come to the altar when invited is a refusal to come to Christ, he will lose his hold on many whom he might hope otherwise to benefit. It is not at all certain that those who are not led to Christ through this means can not be led in other ways. (3) The usual course of conversing with persons who are kneeling at the altar, and at a time when they are supposed to be engaged in prayer, is, in our view, of doubtful utility, not to say propriety. We can not say that it has never helped any one; we can say that it has hindered some. If there is a time when the human soul has need to shut out all external sights and sounds, that time is when it is trying to speak with God. The writer retains a vivid recollection of certain altar services in his boyhood, during which questions and exhortations and songs were poured into his ears by good Christian people, at the very time when he was told that he must pray for himself or he would never be converted. And he can not forget the necessity which he felt himself under of leaving the



kneeling circle, and seeking in a nearby forest the undisturbed intercourse with God, after which he hungered so deeply. Let questions be propounded and needful counsels be given before and after prayer, rather than obtruded upon seekers in those moments when Christ should engage their thought. A very devout man once said in his prayer-meeting: "Lord, help Brother —— to keep still while I am trying to pray." (4) A general request for Christians in the congregation to come forward and labor personally with seekers is usually at the risk of bringing to this delicate and responsible work some who are unfitted for it. If it is regarded as necessary that penitents be personally conversed with during the altar service, pains should be taken to select for that service such as are well reported of for good works, and are blest with solid piety and good sense. (5) There is a tendency in the ordinary altar service to maintain one and the same test of conversion for all cases. The pressure is sometimes very great to secure similar manifestations of spiritual change in all classes. This is likely to interfere, not only with proper individuality, but with the freedom of the work

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of the Spirit. A kind of standard of excellence may be easily set by the relation of experiences which are strongly marked as emotional events, and the type becomes the test. This test to some may be entirely superficial, while to others it may exact the impossible. And when little or no account is made of differences in age, in temperament, in education, or in past habits of life, the natural effect is a religion of imitation instead of spiritual life. (6) The increased attention given to the study of religious experience from the standpoint of psychology has, in recent years, developed the belief that some of the religious phenomena which have usually been attributed to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, appear and disappear from natural causes. Some unwarranted conclusions have been drawn from this change of view, but the fact of such a change is beyond question. Devout Christian scholars accept the later interpretation, and speak and write in its defense. It is not strange, then, that many who observe the ordinary altar service, think they recognize more or less of what they explain as only psychological or pathological manifestations. These phenomena they see; that which is spir-

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itual in connection with them they do not see. They note that the leader places great emphasis upon them as the direct work of the Divine Spirit; he calls on the people to praise God for them, and when they hear him say, "Brethren, come up and create an atmosphere around these seekers," they are inclined to regard the whole matter as a psychological demonstration. The remedy is in substituting some method of revival work which shall be less exposed to this criticism, or at least such a modification of the altar service as shall emphasize nothing which is not essential to personal salvation. Right voluntary states—consecration and trust; these are the states to which God responds. Their normal expression in devotion to God and human well-being are the evidences of the new life. Emotional and conventional tests of conversion have hurried some into the profession of what they have afterwards found to be unreal, while they have sent others into the chills of despair.

6. Revival efforts are sometimes unsatisfactory in their ethical results. The amount of religious feeling developed has been greatly in excess of the Christian living which has fol-

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lowed. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."<sup>3</sup> A genuine revival in a community will diminish profanity, dishonesty, tobacco-using, and beer-drinking. It will right wrongs, heal alienations, and increase the attendance in the churches, at the prayer-meetings, and in the schools. It will multiply demands for good books, and produce a more serious tone in the social life of the young people. It will increase missionary collections, and stir the souls of some young men with a call to the ministry. Every reform movement will be strengthened by a revival. Indeed, reforms and revivals go hand in hand. In 1857 God seemed to pour His Spirit most mightily upon Churches which were fighting the battles of the slave. God bless all forms of aggressive evangelism; but we doubt if great revivals which shall awaken communities and whole countries are not awaiting a united, uncompromising, and aggressive Christian movement against a soul-enslaving, drunkard-making iniquity, which is more shocking to civilization and more insulting to heaven than was American slavery at its worst.

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<sup>3</sup>Jas. iii, 10.



"Sardis was famed among the Churches for spiritual vitality, and yet the Heart-searcher, who seeth not as man seeth, pronounces her dead. How great searchings of heart should her case create among even the best of us!"—Bible Commentary.

"Particular virtues, then, whether they are natural virtues, or virtues of imitation, do not make the being good. There must be some general virtue underneath all these which consecrates and roots in him all the particular ones."—Mozely.

"Nor let us think of Sardis as the only city where a dead Church was to be found. In spite of the profession of the Church, many in it are holding on to the world. They put on Christian uniform, and then fight on the other side."—Pulpit Commentary.

"A special danger of our age is that we may lose perception of the real soul and end of all our labor in the multiplied machinery which carries it on. Our very Christian activities will lead to decline and death if spiritual life is not growing within in proportion."—Vinet.

"For why should a man repent of his goodness? He may indeed repent of its falsehood, but unhappily, the falsehood of it is just the thing he does not see.

The Pharisee did not know he was a Pharisee; if he had known that, he would not have been a Pharisee."—Mozely. .



## IV.

### IN THE CHURCH, BUT UNCONVERTED.

"I know thy works; that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."—Rev. iii, 1.

#### I. *There are unconverted persons in the membership of Churches.*

1. There are those whose spirit and life do not create the impression upon others that they are Christians. Were the fact of their Church relations not known, they would not be suspected of having made a Christian profession. Their acquaintances regard them as Christian only in name.

2. There are those in the Churches who admit this fact concerning themselves. Not to speak of the few self-accusing souls who, by temperament, habitually write hard things against themselves, there are those who thoughtfully and frankly state that they have never realized the essentials of Christian experience and life.



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3. There are those in the Churches who do not exhibit, either to themselves or to others, spiritual growth. Through months and years of their Christian profession, they seem to have gained no higher view-point or spiritual power. They do not seem moved by hunger for righteousness, or solicitude for the salvation of others.

4. There are those whose tastes seem not to have been changed in any perceptible degree, as a result of their professed change of heart. In their chosen associations, in the books they read, in the amusements which they seek, they go on as before their professed new life.

5. The membership of our Churches includes some who appear to shun every form of self-denial. They seem to act under the law of self-interest, if not self-indulgence. They will do little which is not agreeable or profitable to themselves. They have to be coaxed along by appeals to personal profit or loss. Even their religion appears to be the indulgence of a religious sentiment or impulse. Hence their seeming piety is fitful and transient. It appears to be one of several ways in which they seek for "a good time."

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We judge no man, but the facts here stated will hardly be denied.

### II. *How came these unconverted persons to assume the Christian profession and take a place in the Church?*

1. Not as the result of purposed hypocrisy. We believe the number of those who seek connection with the Church as a pretense to piety to be very small. It is possible that some have joined the Church with the thought of gaining the confidence of good people, or with their minds upon business advantages, or to kill suspicions of evil conduct; but we think such cases are very few. John Wesley thought he had met but two out-and-out hypocrites in his lifetime. He certainly had wide opportunity for observing indications of insincerity. Those who are in the Church and unconverted have evidently been led in some way to believe that they had become Christians.

2. There are Churches in which Scriptural conversion, including evidences of regeneration, is not insisted upon as a condition of membership. This was so in the Churches of New England long ago. It is true of some

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Churches now. Loyalty to the Church, conformity to its rites, acceptance of its creed, and decent behavior, are all that is required. Into Churches which institute no tests, and ask no questions concerning personal religious experience, it will be quite easy for unconverted persons to enter. The probationary membership in the Methodist Episcopal Church has its advantages, and it has its dangers.

3. In Churches in which the preaching for any considerable time has been light or sensational, there will be unconverted members. The pulpits which have sought to amuse and entertain, rather than to convince and instruct, pulpits in which the themes have been chosen for their novelty and their power to excite curiosity, have opened the way to an unconverted membership. Church services are too often held fast in the sentimental, set to the key of "the sweet by and by." In congregations thus neglected or misled, persons will come into the Church with the least possible appreciation of sin or of repentance and salvation.

4. Ministers and other Christian workers sometimes take the responsibility of telling awakened persons that they are converted. In

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their anxiety to have every seeker come at once into consciousness of salvation, they assume to know what both God and the sinner have done. In the desire of the seeker to have the evidence of conversion, he will take the word of his teachers and believe himself converted, rather than believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Whenever men come into the belief that they are converted, and yet have not renounced all known sin, they may come into the Church, but they will come in without saving grace. If they cling to some sinful habit; if they are unwilling to know the worst of their cases; if they refuse to believe that their habits are wicked when there is sufficient evidence of the fact, they may work into the belief that they are accepted of God, and go into the Church unsaved.

6. Many children are brought to accept Christ who, from want of Christian nurture in their homes, or from the unspiritual state of the Churches with which they are connected, or from the insistence of older members upon standards of piety inappropriate to child life, or from the subtle influence of their social relations, wander into the world. Some lose spirit-

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ual life while retaining the outward forms required by the Church; others abandon both life and form; still others sit in the silence of religious discouragement. All in the Church, but without the new life of regeneration.

7. Nor is this backsliding into the old life of the world confined to children. Not a few of those who have been longer in the Church have been drawn away from Christ by absorption in business, schemes of worldly gain, the intrigues and ambitions of political life, or the snares of social customs. They give to the Church their names and something of their substance, but their hearts to self-interest and their lives to the world. They are still in the Church, but out of Christ.

8. On the part of pastors and official members the desire to see an increase in the membership of their Churches is intense. Unless the motives are carefully watched, there may be unhealthful haste in receiving candidates for membership. Church officers may see an opportunity to increase the financial strength of the society; a perverted notion as to what constitutes ministerial success may lead the pastor to regard his standing among his brethren as

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dependent upon the number of accessions which he is able to report, and the evangelist greatly desires that his meetings shall be pronounced successful. Unconsciously to all parties concerned, these influences may lead to the reception of persons into the Church with too little regard to their religious condition. And if the spirit of proselytism prevails in a community, the question of Scriptural conversion will measurably sink out of sight. It is easy thus to fill Churches with unconverted members.

### REMARKS.

1. It is a great wrong, not only to the Church, but to the persons themselves when they are received into membership without proper evidence that they are born from above. Not that the same evidences should be insisted upon in every case. Large room should be given to differences in age, in education, in previous personal history, and in temperamental peculiarities. But there should be evidence of a personal acceptance of Christ.

2. The unconverted in our Churches should not be told simply to dissolve their connection with the Church. Churches can not meet *their*

responsibilities in that way. They have been invited to their folds, and no effort should be spared to lead them to Christ. They should be labored with tenderly, lovingly, faithfully. Unless their lives become a reproach upon the cause, they should be sought out and won for the Master. Withdrawal from the Church would probably end the influence of the Church over them, and perhaps prove the end of all effort upon their part to become Christians. Their removal from the Church should be the last dire necessity.

3. Persons who are in the Church and unconverted are in the midst of dangers. They may trust to their Church relations as a kind of guarantee of salvation, at least of final salvation. They may be unwilling to receive truth appropriate to their condition, or they may give place to pride of consistency, and conclude to go on as they are, in a kind of feigned religious life. Either is a way fraught with peril.

4. Unconverted Church members should be frank and open with their pastors and Christian friends concerning their spiritual states. They have too much at stake to be shy or in the least degree insincere. They should not allow them-

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selves to occupy for a day a position false to their convictions. An immediate life-surrender to Christ will bring them into a Divine fellowship, and to "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." A student once said to his pastor: "I want my name taken off the Church record. I have found out that I am not a Christian; I was never converted." The pastor replied: "No matter now about the Church record; there is something better for us first. Let us tell God all about it." They did so, the young man closing his prayer with these words: "Now, Lord, make thorough work with me **this** time, and do give it to me as soon as you **can**." Then and there began his new life. He had nothing more to say about the Church record.





"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."—Paul.

"A Welsh convert once said that he believed Jesus was a Welshman, for He always talked to him in Welsh."—Anon.

"Man yearns for more than the sense of his dependence upon One greater than himself; he asks for the sense of nearness of One who is kin with himself. If man can not creep into the heart of God, he will crouch close under the shadow of those who seem to him Godlike."—Permanent Elements in Religion, p. 132.

"Whenever we make God a sacred confidant, and disclose to Him all those secret things which we would confide to no other being in the universe, then it is that we are in communion with Him. O the unspeakable confidence which the soul feels, when it discloses to God the deepest, darkest, profoundest necessities of the whole being!"—C. G. Finney.

"The infinite greatness of God is a truth which, if it stands alone, confuses, because it dazzles the mind. Transcendent greatness is soon thought to be unapproachable. The counterbalancing truth of the eternal kinship between the infinitely great and the infinitely little is forgotten. God and man can meet, because there is a Divine Sonship."—Permanent Elements in Religion, p. 110.

"A man must be persuaded that he is near to God, and that God is near to him. Men have had that persuasion, and the records of religious experience tell us that they have had a conviction of fellowship with God of so vivid and real a kind as to change their conduct and purify their life. The record of such experience is so wide and so common that it is as well attested as any experience can be."—Theism in the Light of Present Science, p. 295.

"Deepening acquaintance with God is the one all-embracing problem of the Christian life. Every step of this is a personal relation, and its laws are the laws of friendship. Where this is not kept clear, some mystical experience of our own may be exalted, out of all due proportion, into an authority that is supposed not only to make us quite independent of our brethren, but even at the height of our raptures to enable us to do without Christ."—Reconstruction in Theology, p. 174.

## V.

### COMMUNION WITH GOD.

“And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him.”—Gen. xvii, 3.

It is here stated that God talked with a man. It is also implied that a man talked with God, for it is said that God talked *with* Abram, not merely *to* him. And this is only one of many instances in which God and this same man talked with each other. This conversation with God seems to have been a common experience with Abram. Nor was he the only man of whom this fact is stated. In Bible history his case was not exceptional; only moderately remarkable. All the great characters of sacred history stand before us as those who had friendly intercourse with God. They talked with Him.

But was this communion with God a priv-

ilege peculiar to the men of ancient time? Or does God talk with men in our time—in all times? Does God desire to speak with men? Do men need to speak with God, and do they need to know that God speaks with them? Is communion with God essential to Christian experience? Does Christian life include intercourse and loving fellowship with God?

By communion with God we do not mean a theory concerning God; not a mere thinking about God; not any dreamy religious revery; we mean a human soul in a state of intelligent and friendly intercourse with God. We mean a state in which the personal presence of God is recognized, we may say realized, and confided in; a state in which He is constantly consulted and in which His guidance is confidently expected. Is this state ours in Christ Jesus? Is it important that this should become a constant feature of our spiritual life?

I. COMMUNION WITH GOD IS POSSIBLE TO CHRISTIANS NOW.

1. *The character of God intimates this possibility.* He is a person, and He can speak. If He has given us the power of speech, He has

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certainly that power Himself. He is a Spirit, and can speak to spirits whom He has created. He loves, and hence seeks fellowship with those whom He loves. He loves man, and desires companionship with him. Man's highest welfare is in his acquaintance with God, and this a loving Creator seeks. He is a Father, and would have His children live in blissful fellowship with Himself. He is the great Giver, and would give Himself to man. He is infinitely self-sacrificing, and would condescend to the low estate of man.

2. *The nature of man indicates the same possibility.* It is as true of man as of God that he is a *person*. God is a Spirit, and so is man. That man was made in the image of God was not a mere figure of speech. In original constitution there was a kinship of nature between man and his Creator. That the one is finite while the other is infinite, indicates no impossibility of fellowship; a child can commune with the profoundest philosopher. In his measure, man can think God's thoughts; he can feel as God feels; and he can have the same object in his activity. The same motives may influence him; both God and man may be united

in the same work. Communion between them must be a possibility.

3. *Old Testament history presents this view.* We first see man in innocence and in the companionship of his Creator. The paradise of Eden was not so much in landscapes as in this Divine fellowship. Sin worked then, as it has ever since done, separation of man from this friendly intercourse with God. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was the "Tent of Meeting."<sup>1</sup> There the people met with Jehovah. The offerings which were there presented signified the approach of man to God, and were joined with priestly offices and services which indicated their acceptance. Peace-offerings followed sin-offerings. The whole Mosaic priesthood was a system of mediation between God and man.

4. *The New Testament maintains and exalts the same view.* It lifts the idea of intercourse with God to the plane of personal and spiritual communion, with no intervening rites, and with the "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup> This Divine fellowship is promised to every believer through

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<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxix, 32.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. ii, 5.

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“the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>3</sup> God is a speaking God. He spake in old time unto the fathers, and now speaks to us. The distinguishing mark of false gods is the fact that they do not speak to their worshipers. As with the prophets of Baal in the days of Ahab, their worshipers cry unto them, but “there is no voice, nor any that answer.”<sup>4</sup> They are “dumb idols.”<sup>5</sup>

5. *All spiritual worship implies communion with God.* Words, songs, bodily postures, readings, ceremonies of whatever nature, fall short of worship if there be wanting personal communion of hearts with God. The Lord’s Supper is worship only when the communicants “discern the Lord’s body.”<sup>6</sup> Prayer is worship when the soul engages in conversation with the Lord. Worship in prayer is not necessarily confined to petitions for needed blessings. It may include expressions of adoration, thanksgiving for mercies, reviews of God’s dealings; whatever the heart may be led to speak of in the conscious presence of God. A child who

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xiii, 14.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings xviii, 26.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xii, 2.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. xi, 29.



never speaks to his parents excepting when asking for something which he can not hope to get elsewhere, is not in any true sense in communion with them. Said an aged Christian, "It is such a comfort to me to talk things over with God." The greatest thing in answer to prayer is the holy confidence which habitually takes everything to God, and trustfully accepts everything from Him.

6. *Man longs for intercourse with God.* This longing is as native to man as the cry of a lost child for its father. It is in men who do not understand its meaning. We are distressed if we think that Heaven makes no response to our prayers. Silence on the part of God is construed as an omen of rejection. King Saul was filled with forebodings of disaster because "the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets."<sup>7</sup> He resorted to the witch of Endor, as many in all times, not excepting our own, have grasped at superstitions, because God was silent, and the unquenchable desire to hear from Him was unsatisfied. If there are men who never pray, never recognize their dependence;

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. xxviii, 6.

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men who never really do any business with God, they are not in the normal condition of man. Things are not right when children are not on speaking terms with their Father.

### II. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNION WITH GOD SHOULD BE REALIZED.

1. *It is the great satisfying element in religious experience.* He who has this Divine fellowship has "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."<sup>8</sup> It is this which gives the heart rest in loss and sorrow, in criticism and blame. "Religion is communion with God."<sup>9</sup> Christian experience is not a *thing*; it is the realization of the presence of God. In this friendship of God is the home of the soul.

2. *Communion with God breaks the fascinating power of worldly life.* It introduces the soul to its highest joys. Nothing of earth can ever be regarded as of equal value. A loving intimacy with God through Jesus Christ puts to shame all the intoxicating pleasures of sinful life. It enables the Christian to look with

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<sup>8</sup> Philip. iv, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, p. 18.

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pity upon those who know nothing better. It enables him to say:

“As by the light of opening day  
The stars are all concealed,  
So earthly pleasures fade away  
When Jesus is revealed.”

3. *Communion with God develops a proper Christian individuality.* No one who communes with God will shape his life by the wind or the tide. He will not lose himself in the mass. His converse with God will save him from striking an average of public sentiment in questions of duty. It will bring out his best possibilities. Living with God, his life will never float with the current. He will not be a slave, either to the views or the customs of others. The will of God, as he understands it, is the law and the prophets of his life.

4. *Communion with God is the destroyer of doubts.* A Christian man once complained to his minister of the doubts which continually harassed him concerning the Bible and his own religious state. The pastor replied, “The trouble with you, brother, is that *you do n't half pray.*” With the many, doubting comes from having so little to do with God. Fighting

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doubts with the head while the heart is cold, gains no permanent victory. One real interview with God dissolves the doubts of a lifetime. The faith which has been baptized with Divine fellowship will not be easily shaken by philosophical subtleties. The Christian believer may not be able to answer all the sophistries of unbelief in the terms of the schools, but he can always say: "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup> Communion with God makes Him more real to the mind than anything besides.

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<sup>10</sup> 1 John 1, 5.



"To strike a proper balance between the rational and the emotional, is the most serious difficulty of the intellectual life."—Osler.

"An emotional state is not favorable to sharp intellectual discrimination. In proportion to the intensity of the emotion, the attention is distracted from mental processes."—Hill's Psychology, p. 272.

"It does not always depend upon you to *feel*, but it does always depend upon you to *will*. So aim always to will right, and leave it to God the while to quicken your feelings."—Fénelon's Letters, p. 44.

"Feelings exist only when their specific causes are acting. As the causes of feeling are constantly changing, the feelings change. No state of feeling can persist uninterruptedly for a long time."—Hill's Psychology, p. 222.

"Emotion is produced as the accompaniment of Ideas. *Ideal presence* is the condition of emotion. The objects to which the ideas relate may be real or unreal; the effect is the same, if we surrender ourselves to the illusion."—Ibid, p. 253.

"To know is not itself a moral act, yet it is necessary to moral agency. The faculty of feeling is not *per se* moral. The emotions arise necessarily from acts of knowledge, and may be neither meritorious nor blameworthy."—Theoretical Ethics, p. 101.

"In large sections of the Christian Church, the crucial question respecting the Christian life is, 'How do you feel?' The religiousness which rests upon this foundation very easily coexists with a high degree of selfishness."—Ruling Ideas of the Present Age, p. 65.

"The substance of religious experiences as far transcends the emotional forms as a man transcends the clothes he wears. Would you understand the emotional aspects of religious experiences? Do not ascribe them to the inscrutable ways of God, but to the ascertainable differences in men's mental constitutions."—The Spiritual Life, p. 140.

"How many pray eagerly for a *blessing* without stopping to think whether it is more faith, or charity, or humility, or courage, or patience that they need? How apt are such persons to mistake the exhilaration of the animal spirits for heavenly communications? A calm and collected mind is highly favorable to devotion, and a thorough insight into the wickedness of the heart is better, in this state of probation, than the raptures of the third heavens."—Rev. Stephen Olin, D. D.

## VI.

### THE RELIGIOUS FEELINGS.

“Who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness, yet have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time.”—Mark iv, 16, 17.

OF the four classes who heard Jesus, one only was lastingly benefited. With the first named His teachings passed from their minds with the occasion, leaving no trace of effect. Another class were more deeply moved, but allowed the fascinations of world life to lead them astray. These “stony-ground hearers” had religious impulses. Their feelings were quickly awakened. Their religion was a religious *gladness*. They were happy, and that being all they cared for, they had no root; their religiousness soon evaporated.

I. *In the religious life of many, too great emphasis is placed upon the element of feeling.*

1. This is seen when conviction of sin is regarded as consisting wholly or chiefly in an



intense feeling of guilt and danger. Conviction is an intellectual apprehension of truth. Conviction of sin is the knowledge of the fact that we are sinners. When one knows his duty, and knows that he is not doing it, he is convicted of sin. However these facts may be made known to him, they are intellectual apprehensions. The degree of feeling which will be awakened in him as the result of perceiving these truths concerning himself will greatly depend upon his past life, his mental constitution, and upon the clearness with which he sees the truth. In any case his feelings are no part of his conviction of sin. A misplaced stress upon the emotional element in conviction of sin has often led to a perilous "waiting for feeling," when duty has demanded instant action in harmony with existing convictions.

2. A similar notion is frequently entertained in reference to what constitutes *repentance*. This is thought to consist largely in regretful and remorseful feelings. Some appear to attach great value to such feelings, as if they constituted an appeal to the Divine sympathy. Their great fear is that they do not feel deeply enough. The truth is, regret, remorse, self-

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condemnation—not one of them is repentance. Combine them all, and add self-despair; still they are no part of repentance. These feelings may precede repentance in varying degrees, but are not essential to it, and the different degrees are wholly immaterial. They may all exist where there is no repentance, and true repentance may be exercised without their intenser forms. The essential point to be reached in true repentance is the purposed abandonment of all sin—the *surrender of the whole life to Christ*. This being a voluntary state, it can be entered upon with much feeling, with little feeling, or with no perceptible amount of feeling whatever. Those who take deep feeling for repentance will generally fail to repent.

3. As repentance is with many regarded as consisting largely in feelings of distress, so religious experience is often regarded as nearly synonymous with religious happiness. Conversions are frequently marked and dated by the fact of a change in religious feeling. Such a change of feeling very naturally results from the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, in whatever way that knowledge may be received; but it is not the essential in conversion. A genu-

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ine religious experience may, without doubt, begin with a period of rapturous emotion, and there is just as little doubt that it may, and often does, precede such an experience. It is equally true also that many cases of genuine conversion exist, the beginnings of which were never marked by any given hours of spiritual ecstasy.

4. When blissful emotions are taken as the most important evidences of regenerating grace at the first, they are usually received thereafter as the test and gauge of personal piety. The more of rapture, the deeper the experience, is the conclusion. Any sensible loss in religious feeling for a time is construed as evidence of the Divine displeasure, or the sign of backsliding. Religious life thus becomes, in not a few cases, a perplexing struggle to maintain a certain standard of personal religious enjoyment. Religious worry and vacillation are the natural results.

5. Many seem to have no other conception of the "witness of the Spirit" than that it is a wave of joyful emotion. Exultant joy may well arise from the consciousness of acceptance with God; it could hardly be otherwise. But

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emotions, joyful or sorrowful, are the results of ideas in the mind. The Holy Spirit witnesses to a *fact*; viz., that "we are the children of God."<sup>1</sup> He does this through our ordinary channels of thought. He enables us to *know* that we are forgiven and accepted of God. Joyful emotions follow upon this knowledge, in various degrees, and with unnumbered modifications. The exultant feeling is not the "witness of the Spirit," but the result of that Divine illumination of mind in which we are enabled to know that we are the children of God.

6. Prayers for the baptism of the Holy Ghost are common to almost all prayer-meetings, and, in the intent of those who offer them, are certainly most appropriate. But who that is accustomed to attend these services has not frequently observed that thrilling and rapturous feeling appears to be taken as the evidence, if not the very essence, of this Divine gift? It would seem to be often forgotten that the Holy Spirit has as much to do with the intellectual as with the emotional in man. He enables men to *see* quite as much as to *feel*. He quickens all the powers of mind. He made Bezaleel

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii, 16.

## HALF CENTURY MESSAGES.

a genius in architecture;<sup>2</sup> He made David a diplomat and a warrior.<sup>3</sup> Prophets were first of all "Seers."<sup>4</sup> Nothing is said as to the feelings of the company at Pentecost, but it is very clear that they *saw* as they had not seen before. They discovered the nature of the kingdom of God; they discerned their time, and they read their Scriptures in a new light. Paul gives a wonderful list of subjects concerning which those will have *knowledge*, to whom the "Father of glory" gives the "spirit of wisdom and understanding."<sup>5</sup> An emotional life which is begotten of genuine spiritual transformation is certainly of great value, but when fervid religious feeling is regarded as the essential in spiritual states, when it is sought as the evidence and gauge of piety, it becomes a snare and a stumbling-block to many who should be shown a more excellent way.

7. As a further indication of this undue importance given to religious feeling, we notice the fact that, to a very large extent, the Christian testimony, which is generally given in the devotional meetings of the Church, is a relation

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<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxv, 30, 31.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. xvi, 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. ix, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. i, 17-20.

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of personal feeling. This is done with good intent, though sometimes perhaps from habit or imitation, but it means little that is important to the Church and world. It falls immeasurably below the New Testament idea of Christian prophesying. Christian testimony should be a power for good, but it will not become powerful so long as it begins and ends with a relation of personal feelings, enjoyments, and desires.

8. And there are some well-meaning people who, because of this undue valuation of religious feeling, take their feelings as their guides in matters of duty. Duty with them lies in the direction of their strongest feeling. What they feel like doing, they regard as that which they are called to do, and waive aside that to which their feelings do not prompt them. It is well if they do not go one step further, and regard their impulses as the suggestions of the Holy Spirit.

### REMARKS.

1. Religious life in which the element of feeling is unduly emphasized will generally be transient or fluctuating. By psychological necessity, all highly emotional states are transient.

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2. When the supreme attention of the Christian is turned towards his states of feeling, he is liable to overlook the importance of his outward life. This brings upon him the reproach of inconsistency, to his own grief and the injury of the cause he would promote.

3. It is well-known that highly pleasurable emotions may be induced by causes which are psychological or physiological. Religious emotions are not exceptions to this fact. He who has studied this subject but a little will be careful and prayerful in interpreting his own religious feelings. "There is real danger in our best feelings as well as in our worst, and both alike need to be controlled by good sense." It is questionable even if highly emotional states are more profitable in religion than in respect to other things.

4. Matthew Arnold defined religion as "morality touched by feeling." Herbert Spencer said that "religion is a feeling of wonder in the presence of the unknown." Christianity declares religion to be a voluntary devotion of one's being to the good of mankind according to the will of God, and a continual trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

"Whatever may be the extent of inherited tendency, responsibility relates to our volitions."—Hill.

"The good deed without effort is the sign of a higher goodness; the good deed with effort of a higher virtue. For there is no virtue in the goodness which has involved no effort."—Carpenter.

"The Bible never says that faith is a gift. There is a voluntary element in it. It is something to be done by the exercise of an inward power. It is the coming of the soul to Christ."—Van Dyke.

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye."—Bible.

"I am as certain that I am free, to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act, to do this or the contrary, as I am of my own existence. I have the power to choose and do good, as well as evil; I am free to choose whom I will serve."—Wesley.



"Life is self-change to meet environment. We are to tell men that though much has been determined for them by causes beyond their control,—their circumstances, their talents, their faculties,—one thing has not been determined, and that is what they will do with them."—Van Dyke.

"Some persons seem disposed to be passive, to wait for some mysterious influence, like an electric shock, to change their hearts. But in this attitude, and with these views, they may wait till the day of judgment, and God will never do their duty for them. The fact is, God requires you to turn, and what He requires of you He can not do for you. It must be your own voluntary act."—Finney.

"Love to God and love to fellow-men—this is the universally attainable in religious experience. Yet this law is liable to be misunderstood unless we go back to the Greek and observe that the verb translated *love* does not mean 'to be fond of,' does not primarily designate a state of feeling, but a state of will, an attitude of mind that can be voluntarily assumed by all persons, irrespective of temperamental and other peculiarities."—Coe.

## VII.

### THE HUMAN WILL AS A FACTOR IN SALVATION.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."—Rev. iii, 20.

THERE are opposite and extreme views concerning the relation of the human to the Divine in salvation. With some, religion consists in human doings. Little is made of sin or of redemption. To be a Christian is to do about as well as you can.

There are others who seem to expect God to do all that is done in the matter. They are in the attitude of waiting for Him to do something more. They conceive of religion as the result of being *wrought upon*. At most they *desire*, and God must do the rest.

There is a better view which insists that both human and Divine agencies are essential

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to saving religion. These agencies do not work separately and in turns; they co-operate. Of the Divine working we are assured; we have little need to ask for it. To secure the human co-operation is the problem. If we mistake not, the passive in religion is often so emphasized as to relieve men of a just conviction of their responsibility.

### I. NOTE THE OFFICE OF THE HUMAN WILL, IN PERSONAL SALVATION.

1. We do not mean by an act of will, a *wish* merely. We do not mean by a state of the will, a standing *desire*. We mean a voluntary act and attitude of the mind. It is that which carries in it intention and purpose. It is fundamental choice. It includes an "I will," or an "I will not."

2. *The attitude of the will has much to do with what men believe or disbelieve.* It is very difficult to convince men of truth which they are unwilling to believe. They readily accept scientific truth, for, if received, it requires no voluntary change in them. On the contrary, religious truth demands reformation and regeneration. If they refuse to live the truth,

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their beliefs will naturally take the direction of their unconsecrated wills. Not a little of talkative infidelity is born of suppressed convictions of duty.

3. *It is the will which in a great measure determines the degree of conviction of sin.* *Hearing* is, with the many, a condition of conviction; but men may hear or not hear as they choose. *Attention* is necessary to a realization of the truth, but attention is a voluntary matter. Men may search for truth, or they may refuse to make any effort in that direction; what they find or fail to find will correspond with their prevailing purpose. They may accept awakening truth, and thus be led to repentance; or they may reject it because it forces them to self-condemnation. Men's ears have often been dull of hearing because "their eyes they have closed," under the demand to "turn again and be healed." (Matt. xiii, 15.) This closing the eyes is by the will, and prevents conviction of sin.

4. *Action of the will is the essential in repentance.* Scriptural repentance is not a feeling; it is submission to God. Remorse and agony and despair are not repentance; they may

exist without repentance, and repentance may exist without them. Neither tears nor groans constitute penitence, nor do they in all cases evidence the fact. True repentance consists in renouncing our way, and in the acceptance of God's way. It is the purposed abandonment of all which is seen to be sin, and the acceptance of the will of God as the law of life. All this is wholly voluntary. It is right action of the will power. Men can do this, and they can refuse to do it. It can be done with deep feeling, and it can be done with no thought whatever of what the feelings are. Feelings in various forms may come unsought and depart unbidden; but repentance is self-determined.

5. *Accepting Christ as a personal Savior is also a voluntary matter.* We can accept Him, and none can hinder us; we can reject Him, and none can compel us. Faith, like repentance, is not a feeling; it is a voluntary appropriation of Christ, as He is revealed to the soul. It is not something to be waited for and experienced; it is *something to be done*. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John vi, 29.) Repentance and acceptance of Christ are commanded.

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They could not be justly commanded if they were not voluntary.

6. It will be readily admitted that men are never convinced of sin, nor do they repent and believe, without the Holy Spirit. They do not see their sin, nor apprehend Christ as a Savior but in the light of His revealing presence. But they are not without His presence. The Spirit works long with those who refuse to repent. His work is persuasive, not compulsory. The concurrent action of man's voluntary powers is as necessary to salvation as is the work of the Holy Spirit. Man can not be made holy by anything which God can do for him or in him, while he remains in a passive state

### REMARKS.

1. There is a manifest tendency at the present time to place an undue emphasis upon passive states of mind, and a consequent want of stress upon voluntary attitudes. In prayer God is often addressed as though He had power enough to secure the salvation of sinners if He would only bring it to bear upon them. As if sinners could be turned into saints by the exercise of Divine power alone! This is just what

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the impenitent like to hear. It seems to relieve them of immediate responsibility; they are waiting for God's power to sweep them into the kingdom.

2. In efforts to awaken Church members to a sense of obligation, the congregations are often told that, when the Church gets "power," the wicked will come to Christ in crowds. This pleases the unsaved; they want an excuse for waiting, and they have it in the notion that they are sure to come in when the Church gets right. They love to have the responsibility of their salvation transferred from themselves to professed Christians.

3. In some "altar services" the religious feelings, whether of distress or joy, are treated as of special, if not supreme, importance. They gauge conviction; they date conversion; they interpret the witness of the Spirit; they even certify entire sanctification. Cases unusually demonstrative of feeling are noted as special indications of the work of the Spirit. As results, some believe themselves regenerated when their change has been only passive and superficial, to be counted as backsliders the next year, and young converts begin their religious

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life with the notion that their piety is measured by degrees of emotional fervor. If we rightly read the Church life of our time, the most prominent cause of its shortcomings is the fact that many of our members have been led to believe themselves Christians from changes experienced in their passive states. They have attached the greatest importance to mental phenomena which, in conditions which often exist, may have been psychological and pathological, rather than the direct work of the Holy Spirit.

4. In our ordinary prayer services the same tendency may be easily observed. "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" is a prayer often and appropriately offered; but the admonition, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit," is less frequently a prayer-meeting topic. "Lord, make us humble." Yes, but "humble yourselves," is the Scriptural condition of possessing humility. (Jas. iv, 10.) We sing, "Consecrate me, Lord," but half forget that the Bible tells us to consecrate ourselves. "Lord, cleanse us from all sin," is a prayer to which every Christian can respond, Amen, but it will not be answered unless we "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." (2 Cor.



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vii, 1.) "Lord, make us clean," but "wash you; make you clean." Our revisers have done us good service by changing the passive, "be converted," in the several places in the New Testament, into the active, "turn," and "turn again." Men will be *converted* when they *convert*. We shall have *repentance when we repent*; we shall have *faith when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

5. It follows that there is no insuperable difficulty in the way of any one who will become a Christian. No man, no number of men, no circumstances can block his way. Nothing keeps or can keep the soul from God but a perverse will. Change, as you can and should, the supreme object and aim of your life; elect Jesus Christ to rule over and in you; accept Him to save you, and you will be as certain to be saved as that God will not lie.

6. On the other hand, any soul can resist the strongest influences which can be brought to bear upon him. "Irresistible grace," is a delusion and mockery. Christ claims no power to save a sinner who does not voluntarily "come unto God by Him." (Heb. vii, 25.) Never till then, but always then, will a sinner be saved.

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7. It follows that every man is responsible for his sinful state. He is *wholly* responsible for this, and will be equally responsible for his final destiny. Christians should be exceedingly careful not to relieve the conscience of an unsaved soul of a sense of this responsibility. He should never be told that he needs more conviction or deeper feeling. He should be shown that his duty is to surrender himself to Christ at once without conditions; that to wait for prompting feelings in the presence of apprehended obligations, is a wicked procrastination. He should be made to see that he can not put God under obligations to him by agonies or vows or gifts or prayers; that surrender to the will of God is the first right thing which it is possible for him to do. That is a stubborn sinner who groans and rages before he yields to God. His distress is a sure indication of self-will and impenitence. Whole-hearted submission to God would banish his bitterness of spirit, and open his way to the sin-forgiving Savior.



The old heathen cartman who prayed to Hercules to lift his cart out of the mud, was told by the god to put his own shoulder to the wheel.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."—Ex. xiv, 15.

"It is ill treatment of God, not to expect Him to fulfill His own promises. An unexpected appeal of prayer ought to be expecting a denial."—The True Believer, p. 221.

"There are millions of people all over the world who are devoutly praying for help in doing wrong. What they need is not more religion, but a better philosophy of life."—Ruling Ideas of the Present Age, p. 91.

"A superstitious religion is always desiring to have God on its side; but an ethical religion is always studying to be on God's side. Let us be careful about our prayers. They show our hearts to God, and ought to reveal them to ourselves."—Gospel of Common Sense, p. 197.

"For instance, we ask for money; and we expect an answer of happiness. But we do not get happiness; we only get money, which is a wholly different thing. We ask for popularity and reputation, and we expect these gifts, when received, to last; but we have asked for something whose very nature is that it does not last. It is like asking for a soap-bubble and expecting to get a billiard-ball."—Francis G. Peabody.

"We should *live* and *pray* for the same thing. We pray against the world, but live for it. We pray against pride and ambition, but nurture them all the day long; against appetite, but pamper it; against temptation, but brave it. This is in fact an insult upon God, and acting as if we thought we could impose upon Him.

"Many pray *for* and live *against* their salvation. They call on God to sanctify them, and then do whatever comes in their way to defile the Spirit's temple.

"Parents pray, and beg their ministers to pray for the conversion of their children; they weep and sigh, but do not restrain or train them, but leave the whole matter to God."—Rev. Stephen Olin, D. D.

## VIII.

### UNANSWERED PRAYERS.

“Ye have not because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”—Jas. iv, 2, 3.

HERE are two surprising statements: (1) That some persons do not pray; (2) That some who do pray, do it in such states of mind that their prayers are not answered. Strange that any man should live without prayer. Weakness, want, sinfulness, and unreached ideals, all suggest to any considerate soul the necessity of help from God. Divine encouragements present prayer as an inestimable privilege—the privilege of all. Who would part with his right to pray? For what would a man promise never to pray? It is significant that only those who do not pray deny the utility of prayer. But what right have those who do not pray to tell others who do pray that it does no

good? Becoming modesty should restrain such from pretending to know the uselessness of that which they have never tried.

But is it not strange that so much which we call prayer is apparently unanswered? Does not God "give to all men liberally, and upbraideth not?"<sup>1</sup> Did not Jesus say, "Ask and ye shall receive?"<sup>2</sup> Is not the Heavenly Father more willing than earthly parents to give good gifts unto His children?<sup>3</sup> And is He not "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think?"<sup>4</sup> Why, then, should there be any unanswered prayers?

I. PRAYER IS SOMETIMES ANSWERED WHEN  
WE ASSUME THAT IT IS NOT.

I. *When God says, "No," it is as really an answer as when He says "Yes."* We are wont to call that only an answer to prayer in which we see our particular requests granted. When what we ask is denied us, we say there is no answer from God. In our ignorance we may have asked for that which God could not wisely and consistently give. The answer came in a refusal to grant our requests. It was an answer

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<sup>1</sup>James i 5.    <sup>2</sup>Matt. vii, 7.    <sup>3</sup>Matt. vii, 11.    <sup>4</sup>Eph. iii, 20.

## UNANSWERED PRAYERS

of God. We can not know all that God knows of the relations of events, and it is doubtless as true of us as it was of the sons of Zebedee, that we often know not what we ask.<sup>5</sup> We may grieve the heart of our Lord by asking for that which He sees would injure us and others, and when He would have us see this we accuse Him of silence or indifference.

2. *Prayer is not always unanswered when not answered immediately.* In cases in which prayer is unmistakably answered there may be good reasons why answer is delayed. We may but poorly realize what it is to pray. Heaven waits for us to reach something like proper views of this most exalted exercise in which we ever engage. In answers to prayer God gives a kind of indorsement of the states of mind which we entertain while we are in prayer. It would not be wise in Him, nor good for us, were He to appear to sanction that which is wrong in us. Answer to our prayers may involve the voluntary activity of others besides ourselves. This is necessarily the case in intercessory prayer. The movements of the heavenly powers are resisted on the earth.<sup>6</sup> Wait-

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<sup>5</sup> Matt. xx, 22.

Dan. x, 12, 13.



ing is a needful grace, but difficult to exercise. It evinced the great faith of Abraham.<sup>7</sup> God bears long with His own elect; "nevertheless He will avenge them speedily."<sup>8</sup>

3. *We often count prayer as unanswered because the answer is not in the manner we had anticipated.* We are inclined to intense literalism in our interpretations of answers to prayer. We make up our minds beforehand just *how* our prayers will be answered, if answered at all, and we recognize no answer but that which is in our own thought. It often occurs that God sees a better way than we had imagined. His answer introduces us to things higher and richer than we had asked or thought. Paul prayed for deliverance from the embarrassment of the "thorn in the flesh;" he found the answer, not in its removal, but in an increased measure of the power of Christ resting upon him, which enabled him to "glory in his infirmities."<sup>9</sup> He prayed for a prosperous journey to Rome, "by the will of God,"<sup>10</sup> and hoped to be brought on his way thitherward by sympathizing brethren.<sup>11</sup> His journey, was indeed

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Gen. xxi, 5; Rom. iv, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Luke xviii, 7.

2 Cor. xii, 7, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. i, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Rom. xv, 24.

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prosperous beyond measure, though it was through years of imprisonment and the perils of shipwreck.<sup>12</sup> We pray for patience, and God answers us by taxing and developing the little patience we have. We pray for our children, and God shows us how we have sinned against them, both before and since they were born. Praying souls must look for answers to prayer in more ways than one, and should be trustful, though they can never know in this world just how literally or how fully many of their prayers are answered.

### II. BUT WHEN IS PRAYER REALLY UNANSWERED?

1. *Prayer is unanswered when it is prompted by selfishness.* When our askings are from a desire to secure that which will please and gratify ourselves, with little regard for the well-being of others, we can have little intelligent expectation that God will answer us. God is perfectly benevolent. He can look with no favor upon selfish praying. If we place our worldly prosperity, our personal happiness, in this world or the next, as the matter of su-

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<sup>12</sup> Acts xxvii.

preme concern, while the well-being of others is held subordinate, we are out of harmony with God's nature and plans. We should not knowingly offer any petition to God which the Holy Spirit can not indorse. When that which is personal to us is first, and the good of others regarded as incidental, we are not "praying in the Holy Ghost."<sup>13</sup> When we pray from the suggestions of selfishness, we are asking God to act selfishly also. This He would do if He were to grant our requests. This he will not do, and so our selfish prayers are not answered.

2. *It is possible to pray for what we do not really desire.* Those who thus ask will not receive. When we pray that the will of God may be done, but refuse to accept His will as the law of our activity, we pray for what we, if we understand ourselves, do not desire. We prefer our wills to His. Do we pray for a forgiving spirit, but harbor ill-will towards those who have injured us? Then we do not desire to have our prayers answered. Do we pray that God will take away our pride of heart, while we cling to it and even nurse it? Do we ask that Christ may be with us, and yet part com-

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<sup>13</sup> Jude vs. 20.

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pany with Him by choosing associations which He can not approve? "All things whatsoever ye *desire when ye pray*, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."<sup>14</sup> Who shall blame God for not giving in answer to prayer that which is not really desired?

3. *If we voluntarily consent to what we believe to be sin, our prayers will be unavailing.* "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."<sup>15</sup> Practicing in our lives that which *we doubt*, if it be not sin, will render our prayers insincere. Drifting with custom at the expense of conscience;<sup>16</sup> gratifying appetites and tastes in things which our hearts condemn;<sup>17</sup> refusing to apply Christian principles to business, social, and political life; attempting to maintain a double life—secular with the world, and religious with the Church—these and such like inconsistencies will keep our prayers from the ear of God.

4. *When we ask God to do what He tells us to do, our prayers will be unanswered.* It is of little use to pray for repentance when God tells us to repent. Men may find it more to

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<sup>14</sup> Mark xi, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Psalms lxvi, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Rom. xiv, 23.

<sup>17</sup> 1 John iii, 20, 21.

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their minds to ask that it be done for them, than to do it themselves, but God will not; we may say He can not substitute His own acts for theirs. It is worse than useless to pray for physical health while we pay little or no attention to the laws of health. Prayer can never be made a substitute for doing our duty. A wealthy man in a Chicago prayer-meeting once requested the good people to pray that the pressing wants of a poor family of his acquaintance might be supplied. Mr. Moody was present and responded: "If I were in your place, brother, I would not trouble the Lord with such a little thing as that; I would attend to that myself." Such praying is but a makeshift to excuse the neglect of Christian duty. God is too good and too self-consistent to answer such prayer. It is not enough to pray for the conversion of our neighbors; God never made that the end of our responsibility for their salvation. Patient, loving, persistent effort in their behalf is the best part of such prayers. It will avail little to pray for sanctification unless we sanctify ourselves. Those who consistently pray to be cleansed from all sin, must not fail to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the

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flesh and spirit.”<sup>18</sup> That prayer will be unanswered which asks that we may get into heaven at last, if we refuse to let heaven into our inner lives here. And just as futile will it be to pray for the destruction of the saloon power while we vote to legalize the institution itself. Right prayer must be joined to right living.

5. *When our faith is in prayer, rather than in the Hearer of prayer, we shall not be answered.* There is a tendency to attribute to prayer a kind of magical power. Its frequency, its earnestness, its persistency is emphasized, not merely as indicating proper states of mind in those who pray, but as containing a kind of meritorious energy—a quality of irresistibility. “Prayer chains” are sometimes organized, as though numbers and union would sway the Hand almighty. All this may be well meant, but there is a vein of superstition in it. It is not well to intimate that the effects of prayer are psychological merely. We should not give occasion for the thought that God is moved by numbers or by sympathetic appeals. God does not give so much blessing for so much

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<sup>18</sup> 2 Cor. vii, 1.

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praying. He gives all He wisely can. Prayer should be frequent, constant even, but this is not because the Lord regards our much speaking. Earnestness becomes those who hold audience with the Most High, but this adds no merit or intercessory charm to prayer itself. So far as it indicates the intercession of the Spirit,<sup>19</sup> it is a Divine response to the praying soul. Such prayer becomes the "energized and effectual prayer of the righteous man, that availeth much."<sup>20</sup> Prayer can never be more than appointed means. It can not compel; it can not persuade; it can only receive.

6. *If prayer is not offered in the name of Christ it will be unanswered.*<sup>21</sup> In theory this is admitted by all praying people, but practically it may be easily overlooked. We plead our needs, our promises, our repentance, as giving us reason to expect that God will hear our prayer. It is well if we do not lean somewhat upon our own worth, as if God could hardly get along without us. We forget that Jesus Christ is the way to God.<sup>22</sup> He does not merely teach the way; that might be said of Peter and

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<sup>19</sup> Rom. viii, 26.

<sup>20</sup> James v, 16.

<sup>21</sup> John xiv, 13; xvi, 24.

<sup>22</sup> John xiv, 6.

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Paul and of many other good men as well. But Christ *is* the way; and this can be said of none but Him. We have no standing before God in ourselves. All grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father comes to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.





“And we are His witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.”—Acts v, 32.

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”—Acts xiii, 2.

“The more full the gifts and divine breathings of the Spirit, the busier let us be—busier in the use of prayer, of sacraments, of the Bible, and of all those means through which the Spirit works.”—Guthrie.

“Our unconverted acquaintances are dearer to God than they can be to us, and He does not need or want to be entreated and persuaded by us to do what He can for them. He is all the time doing all He can to save them. What He wants is for us to help Him to persuade them to be reconciled to God; to unite our entreaties and warnings with His.”—Anon.



## IX.

### CHRISTIANS MUST WORK AS THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS.

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.”—Acts xv, 28.

ONE feature of this earliest Church history stands out very prominently—the Holy Spirit led and the disciples followed. They went where He directed.<sup>1</sup> They said what He said.<sup>2</sup> When in council, whatever seemed good to the Holy Ghost, seemed good to them also.<sup>3</sup> Their message and method were the same as those of the Holy Spirit. They broke with tradition; they did new things; they uttered truth new and strange to their generation, because the Holy Spirit did the same. They worked as the Holy Spirit worked. Paul’s audiences at Corinth came together to be amused. They cared little for what a speaker said if he only

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xv, 28.

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pleased them. They loved the oratorical and the dramatic, and they did not see in the apostle their ideal for a public speaker. Paul had a message from God to deliver, and it made him grandly in earnest. He could not stop to meet the tastes of the trivial; the Holy Ghost was preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified to the people, and he must do the same.<sup>4</sup> He knew philosophy, but he preached the sermons of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Theoretically all Christian people agree that the good which comes through human effort is the result of the presence of the Holy Spirit with and in the workers. Ministers are ready to admit that they are not sufficient of themselves to think anything as of themselves, but that their sufficiency is of God.<sup>6</sup> We pray that our word may be in "demonstration of the Spirit and with power,"<sup>7</sup> and it is easy to repeat, "Without Me ye can do nothing."<sup>8</sup> But are we quite as certain that our ways of working correspond with those of the Holy Spirit? Do we not sometimes attempt to lead and ask the Spirit to follow us? In cases in which very

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ii, 2.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ii, 4.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. iii, 5.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. ii, 4.

<sup>8</sup> John xv, 5.

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meager results appear to follow well-meant efforts, may it not be that what has seemed good to us has not seemed good to the Holy Ghost? In seeking lower forms of good we study to know God's ways of working in order that we may conform to them. The farmer does not expect a harvest unless he puts his efforts in line with God's great laws. That physician who expects to effect cures while disregarding the Divine methods in physical law, must be either a simpleton or a quack. And in seeking the spiritual welfare of ourselves and others, is there less necessity of conforming to the Divine methods?

1. *The Holy Spirit works normally.* He addresses the human soul in a normal manner. He uses the intellectual and moral faculties. He addresses the reason; He presents considerations to the mind calculated to lead to right decisions. His work with human souls is persuasive, and hence the apostle said of ministers, "We persuade men."<sup>9</sup> His work in the conversion of a soul is not a miracle in the popular sense; it is a work in perfect harmony with the laws of mind. He is a Person, and speaks to

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. v, 11.

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men as persons. This view led Paul to "reason" with his hearers.<sup>10</sup>

2. *The Holy Spirit works through the truth.* He is "the Spirit of truth."<sup>11</sup> He never misrepresents or deceives. He practices no artifices or concealments; He never exaggerates. "The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God."<sup>12</sup> He works no schemes or tricks or shams. He works conviction through the truth. He illuminates the understanding enabling the mind to apprehend the truth. He withholds no truth necessary to the purposes of salvation, however unpalatable or self-condemning. Paul so conformed his ministry to the methods of the Holy Spirit that he could say of his work at Ephesus, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."<sup>13</sup>

3. *The Holy Spirit never appeals to selfish motives.* He does not present salvation in Christ as a superior way of securing present happiness, nor as a scheme for getting to heaven. He promises no man ease or worldly

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<sup>10</sup> Acts xvii, 2; xviii, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Acts xx, 20.

<sup>11</sup> John xvi, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Eph. vi, 17.

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advantage as the reward of piety. He seeks to break up the old self-seeking states of mind, and to bring the whole soul to accept its obligations to God and the world. He does not present the Church as a savior, nor Church membership as a certificate of transportation to a better world, but only as the best possible environment, and as furnishing the highest opportunities for service to mankind. In harmony with the teachings of Jesus, the Holy Spirit insists upon self-renunciation as a condition of discipleship. He teaches that to become Christians men must consent to live for that for which Christ lived, and be swayed by the motives which actuated Him. If we work as the Holy Spirit works, we must direct men to their duties rather than to their possible gains.

4. *The Holy Spirit convinces men of sin.*<sup>14</sup> Not so much of *sins* as of *sin*—sin as a voluntary state of disobedience to God; a devotion to self-pleasing; a maintenance of self-will as against the will of God. He convinces men not only of the *fact* of sin, but of its *unreasonableness and wickedness*. In His teaching, sin

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<sup>14</sup> John xvi, 8.



in its most heinous manifestation is the rejection of Christ as offered in the Gospel. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me."<sup>15</sup> If we teach with Him, we shall maintain that sin is of a nature which no excuses can palliate, no temptations justify. We shall insist that, whatever their environment, all men are responsible for their conduct up to the measure of their light. We shall suggest no time for repentance but the present, and no way of beginning Christian life but in an unconditional surrender to Christ. We shall teach that, under Gospel invitations, the great sin of sins which comprehends and indorses all others is the refusal to accept Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. And we shall insist that salvation through Christ is more than decency in outward behavior. It is in apprehending these self-convicting truths that men come to know their great need of Christ. Are we working with the Holy Spirit in His efforts to convince men of sin?

5. *The Holy Spirit reveals Christ.* We should know nothing saving of Him if He did not. "He shall not speak of Himself. . . . He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of

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<sup>15</sup> John xvi, 9

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Mine, and shall show it unto you.”<sup>16</sup> It is in the light that we see objects; we do not see the light itself. It is in the light of the Holy Spirit that we see Christ and the way of salvation. If we work as the Holy Spirit works we shall do all we can to turn the attention of men to Christ, keeping ourselves as much as possible out of view. No spiritual good will come to others by seeing us, unless they see Christ in us. Caution is needed in the relation of our own religious experiences, lest we get ourselves in front and Christ in our shadows. Our outward fortunes and inward experiences may help others, provided they all point to Christ, and are related with becoming modesty and humility. But when we make ourselves illustrations of saving grace, we walk on a narrow shell. We may well pray for spiritual poise to enable us to go safely. If others catch a sight of Jesus therein, it is well; but if they think they see ourselves on exhibition, the effect counterworks the Holy Spirit.

6. *The Holy Spirit works tenderly.* He is never said to be angry. He can be grieved.<sup>17</sup> His light in the soul can be quenched.<sup>18</sup> He

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<sup>16</sup> John xvi, 13, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Eph. iv, 30.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Thess. v, 19.

can be resisted.<sup>19</sup> Nothing like coercion or violence is ever attributed to Him in the Scriptures. He illuminates, He invites and entreats, He expostulates and warns. Threatening is His strange work. He yearns over lost men as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He works with the tenderness with which a mother seeks a wayward child. So must we work to save men if we are "workers together with God."<sup>20</sup>

7. *The Holy Spirit works persistently.* He does not work in fits and starts, nor does He confine Himself to special occasions. He is all the time at work. He does not abandon a sinner because he is hard and stubborn, but stays with him, and uses all opportunities to get nearer to him. If he ever abandons a soul, it is when his impenitence has become so confirmed that all hope of persuading him to change is gone. He adapts His efforts to changing times and conditions. When repelled and defeated He renews His efforts, and is infinitely patient towards those who are indifferent to His admonitions. If we work with the Holy Ghost we shall labor with the individual, and we shall not give him up so long as God

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<sup>19</sup> Acts vii, 51.

<sup>20</sup> 2 Cor. vi, 1.

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works with him. We shall never say, "It will do no good to go after him." If the Holy Spirit goes after him, it is ours to follow. Wise workers will be constantly on the watch for cases with whom the Spirit is at work. The Sunday sermon should find them; the prayer-meeting should gather them; the personal effort should hunt them out. They are in the shop and the store and the home, not less than in the Sunday-school and the special meeting. Are we praying that what seems good to us may seem good to the Holy Ghost also? Or are we saying, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us also?"



“And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”—Matt. xxv, 2.

“We know that we have passed from death unto life.”—1 John iii, 14.

“And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.”—Eph. ii, 1.

“And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”—Matt. xxv, 33.

“For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.”—Eph. v, 8.

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”—Matt. xxv, 46.

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but He that believeth not is condemned already.”—John iii, 18.

"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one."—Matt. xiii, 38.

"In this the children of God are manifested, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."—1 John iii, 10.

"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness; but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life."—Rom. vi, 20, 22.

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."—Eph. ii, 12, 13.

## X.

### SOME ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SAINTS AND SINNERS.

"Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not."—Mal. iii, 18.

THAT was a dark day in which Malachi was called to the prophetic office. The priesthood was unspiritual and mercenary.<sup>1</sup> The Church followed its leaders into worldly life, and religion had become largely an empty form.<sup>2</sup> Social vices went unrebuked, and family life was cursed by divorce and adultery.<sup>3</sup> Political life had become corrupt; wicked men were in power, and the poor were oppressed.<sup>4</sup>

As a result, a spirit of unbelief prevailed. Men said that the proud were happy, and that it was a vain thing to serve God.<sup>5</sup> They did not believe that prayer did any good, and thought the wicked were getting on as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Mal. i, 6, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ii, 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 14-16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* iii, 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 14.



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others.<sup>6</sup> They could see no difference between the righteous and the wicked; they all behaved much alike, and God seemed to treat them all in the same way.

Against this general skepticism the prophet lifted his voice. "You say," he says, "that there is no difference between the righteous and the wicked? You will change your mind on that question. God has a faithful few whom He prizes as His jewels, and when days of judgment come they will be spared as a man spares his own son. You will then see for yourselves that there is a great difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."<sup>7</sup>

The spirit which discerns no difference between God's people and those who are not, is not exclusively Jewish, nor was it confined to the time of Malachi. There are still those who claim that all differences in moral character are a sliding scale in which there is no zero point, and in which Christian experience is no determining factor. This perverted view results in part from the fact that many who claim to be Christians give sad occasion, by their

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<sup>6</sup> Mal. ii, 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* iii, 18.

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worldly spirit and life, for the inference that the difference between them and the world is chiefly one of profession. It is the result also of that tendency in men to deny that others are better than themselves. Admitting that there are those who possess a purer spirit and live a holier life than themselves, the conviction is forced upon them that they are wrong—unfaithful and unsaved. Men are unwilling to be thus convinced of sin. Even Satan resented the insinuation that he was not as good as Job. He charged that the difference between himself and the patriarch was due to the better treatment of the latter on the part of God. Job had been God's favorite, while he had been a cast-off.<sup>8</sup> The question was one of difference in environment. The devil still repeats the lie. The notion that there is no material difference between Christians and those who are not Christians is sometimes encouraged in religious circles. When things unessential in Christian character are emphasized as the very credentials of genuine piety, and when that which is most important receives but little attention, the conclusion is easily reached that the difference

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<sup>8</sup> Job i, ii.

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between the two classes is a superficial one. We have need at this point to discriminate with wisdom and faithfulness. To mistake here may lead some to think themselves Christians when they are not, and others to despair who should be taught to trust.

That there are radical differences between those who are Christians and all who are not Christians, is a fact assumed throughout the whole Bible, and in the New Testament especially it is dwelt upon in detail. Not only are differences affirmed, but such differences as amount to contrasts. The terms by which these two classes are characterized are as a rule antithetical. Light and darkness, living and dead, freedom and slavery, citizens and aliens; these and such like terms are used to indicate the fundamental unlikeness of saints and sinners. It is significant also that, from the New Testament point of view, there are but just these two classes. Men are either in the world or in Christ; condemned or forgiven. The Bible does not claim that these differences, in all their extent and meaning, are open to the gaze of the world; but it does maintain that they really exist.

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### I. IN WHAT, THEN, CONSIST THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SAINTS AND SINNERS?

1. *Not in anything which both classes may possess in common.* Whatever may be their differences, it is plain that they can not be differentiated by what belongs to both. These differences must include that which a Christian is and must be in order to be a Christian, and they must include that which can not be affirmed of those who are not Christians. That which both have or can have in common is not their essential difference.

2. *The difference can not consist in anything which is constitutional.* Natural traits, gifts, and endowments, whatever they may be, do not determine Christian character. Nothing which is inherited from ancestors can make one a saint or a sinner. The right use of natural abilities, and the government of inherited dispositions, come into the question of Christian life, but their existence can not constitute moral differences. Varieties in constitutional traits are exhibited by both good men and bad men. Peter was hasty; Thomas was slow. John was

a philosopher; Matthew was a man of affairs. No two men were less alike than Luther and Melanchthon, though it is beyond human discernment to determine which was the greater saint. Some good men, some bad men are impulsive and sympathetic in the presence of suffering; others are coldly practical. Some wicked men despise what is little and mean, but enjoy much that is sinful, provided it is shrewdly performed. Fathers and mothers, good and bad, love their children, and so do the brutes. Semblances of virtue may thus exist in what is purely constitutional, and which possess no moral character. They do not in any way distinguish a saint from a sinner.

3. *The difference is not wholly or exactly in outward life.* A general correspondence of life to character may be safely affirmed. There are virtues which seldom or never appear in other than Christian lives, and there are vices which we know men can not practice and at the same time be Christians. But correctness of outward life may to a great extent be imitated by those who are not Christians. The influence of home training and of the school; the force of law and custom and general sentiment; the

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presence of a moral atmosphere, created by Christianity itself,—all have the effect to hold many men to right lines of conduct. Men may avoid indulgences from the knowledge of the ruin which they work to body and mind. They may care too much for their names to throw them away upon appetite. Financial considerations may demand a course which shall secure to them the respect of the community. Some forms of sin exclude others, a miser can not be a drunkard or a gambler, and it is possible for men to bridle themselves in some directions that they may run without restraint in others. On the other hand, great inconsistencies appear in the lives of good men. They have been wrongly taught, or perhaps taught not at all. Their old ways of thinking and living are not broken up in a day. It is only in piecemeal, and in process of time, that their whole lives are brought to the test of their religious vows. Just how to order one's life so as best to honor God and serve human well-being is, to every serious man, a lifelong study. Good men grow more and more consistent as their light increases, and yet their external life may never fully express their spiritual state. To find the

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difference between saints and sinners, we must go beyond *what they do*, to *why they do as they do*.

4. *Nor is the essential difference between saints and sinners one of intellectual belief.* Good men may be in error, and bad men may accept a good creed. Without doubt right moral states are favorable to the apprehension and acceptance of religious truth, and it is equally true that wrong moral states are in the way of a proper appreciation of spiritual realities. A Christian has no possible interest against the truth, and in the degree in which he is spiritually minded he is helped to discern it. But he is not infallible, and may fall into error. On the other hand, men are inclined to disbelieve that which they do not desire to have true. Religious truth rebukes sinful men; it charges them with violated obligations, and judgment is easily biased when self-defense becomes necessary. But in any case, it is not doctrines; it is not theories which render one class Christian and the other unchristian. Good men may go astray in belief and yet be right in heart, and bad men may "hold down the truth

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in unrighteousness.”<sup>9</sup> Both good men and bad approve honesty, truthfulness, and justice; both condemn ingratitude, treachery, and oppression. All men, whatever their character, are compelled by the laws of their mental constitution to do intellectual homage to self-sacrificing goodness.

5. *Many forms of religious feelings are common to both the righteous and the wicked.* Under conditions which move the sensibility, many who remain unconverted feel badly in view of their sin; they dread its consequences; they desire a better state, and as they conceive of heaven, they desire to go there. They are often glad to see others starting in religious life, and wish that they themselves were Christians. So Christians feel sorrow for sin; they desire to be better; they desire to go to heaven, and they rejoice when others begin the new life. We do not say that these emotional experiences have always the same causes, or that they mean the same in both classes; we only insist that any experience which goes no further than the *realm of desire* can not, with any degree of certainty, distinguish Christians from all others.

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<sup>9</sup> Rom. i, 18.



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Passive states are brought into existence under fixed conditions, and to a greater or less degree under the same conditions with all classes of people. They do not therefore identify Christian character.

6. *Christians differ from all others in their aim and end of life.* The Christian lives for that for which Christ lives—to reveal God and thus promote the highest good of man. He chooses what he understands God to choose, and whatever the form of his activity, his ultimate purpose centers in the will of God. He seeks to bring about in the world that which Christ seeks to accomplish. It hardly need be said that none but Christians live in this voluntary choice of the right end of life. To make this choice is, *on the human side*, to become a Christian. In all forms of sinful life the ultimate aim falls to the plane of self-gratification—self-pleasing—self-interest. The inner life is dominated by the principle of self-regard. Here is a radical difference. The one can never be shaded into the other. It is not a difference of view, or of feeling, or of degree; it is a fundamental difference between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not.

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7. *Christians have peace with God.*<sup>10</sup> This does not mean merely that they have a feeling of peace in their minds. It means more than that they have a blissful persuasion that God, through grace in Christ, treats them as righteous. It means that they have *actually come into harmony with God*. They choose the same end which He chooses, and in their measure seek to accomplish it by the same means. The ungodly are not so.<sup>11</sup> While their aims are the opposite of the aims of God they can not have peace with Him. Every feeling of peace which they have is world-begotten and delusive. Here, then, is a fact which *is true* of Christians, but which is not and *can not be true* of those who are in impenitence.

8. *Oneness and separateness distinguish the relations of the two classes to God.* The Christian has no interest separate from Christ's interests. By cheerful surrender and devotion he has accepted the fact that he belongs to Christ. His family, his farm, his trade, his profession, his all, he recognizes as made over to Christ. With the natural man, his home, his property, and his business are his own. He manages

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<sup>10</sup> Rom. v, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Psa. i, 4.

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them for himself. The profits are his to use as he pleases. What he contributes to any interest of Christ's kingdom is a charity which he might have withheld without taint of neglect. He recognizes no vital connection between God's business and his. Here are differences of life which can never harmonize or coexist in the same person.

9. *With the Christian the will of God is final authority in all matters.* He needs no other reason for doing or not doing than that the contemplated action is pleasing or displeasing to God. The question with him is not, what will be most easy or agreeable to himself; not what will bring him the greatest returns in money or favor; not what others do or will do; the one question with him is: "What is the will of God? Will this course promote the end which Christ is seeking to accomplish?" Those who are not Christians sometimes do religious things, but they must generally be stimulated to action by some appeal to self-interest. The idea of duty is not enough to lead them. When unsaved men come into Churches, they must be coaxed along by motives that address their self-centered states of mind. They are sensitive

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to neglect; they shun burden-bearing; they pick out the duties which they propose to perform, though the will of God is equally related to them all. These facts concerning these classes indicate a radical difference—a difference at the very seat of life.

10. *The Christian is "in Christ."* More than thirty times in one form or another, this statement appears in the New Testament. It is used to signify what we generally mean by conversion or regeneration.<sup>12</sup> It means that Christian believers have entered into the will of God as their law; they have accepted Christ as King and Savior; they pray in His name; they trust alone in His atoning work; they overcome in His strength; they live in His life.

Strikingly in contrast with all this is the state of the unregenerate man. He is "without Christ."<sup>13</sup> He is in himself. He trusts that he is about as good as most people, and better than many; he is "doing about as well as he can;" he thinks that he deserves fairly well at the hands of his Maker; he lives unto himself and in himself. The saint is in Christ; the

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<sup>12</sup> Rom. viii, 1; xvi, 7; 2 Cor. vii, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Eph. ii, 12.

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sinner is out of Christ. Can a more radical difference exist in human characters?

11. *The saint and the sinner are both religious.* The religion of the one is experience and life; that of the other, the doing of religious things. The sin of the one is on Christ; that of the other on himself. The one overcomes temptation, for he trusts in Christ; the other is overcome by it, for he trusts in himself. The one is led by love; the other driven by fear. The one would live unto God were there no hereafter; the other would be glad of some other way in which he might get to heaven. One is a child, the other a slave. And at last, one is on the right hand; the other on the left.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Matt. xxv, 46.

"Self-denial is self-love living for the future."—Neal Dow.

"His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust."—Job xx, 11.

A young man in a State's prison was asked by the chaplain as to the causes which led him to his crime and punishment, to which the convict replied: "Three things; First, I was allowed plenty of money; second, I had nothing to do; third, I always had my own way."—Rev. B. I. Ives.

"No man can be trusted as a public officer who is dishonest or untrue in private life. Integrity is not a virtue to be put on and off like a coat at the convenience of the wearer. A good man will advocate what he thinks is right, in public or private affairs, whether it concerns his party or his purse."—Morals and Manners, p. 153.

"I have sometimes wished that I might see an angel, and become acquainted with that order of beings, but in recent years I have more desired to see something higher—I have wanted to see *a man*. In my misguided thought I have sometimes wished that I myself were an angel, but I have long ago dismissed that aspiration; I want simply to be *a man*."—Rev. B. F. Tefft.

"Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Demand more of yourself than anybody expects of you. Keep your own standard high. Never excuse yourself to yourself, but be lenient to others. The art of making one's fortune is not to spend. In this country any intelligent, industrious young man may obtain a competency if he will stop all leaks, and is not in a hurry. Do not make haste; be patient. Do not despise your father's and mother's God. You will need all your nerve to keep your heart before God. Do not despise small churches and humble ministers."—Letter of Henry Ward Beecher.

## XI.

### SOME MISTAKES OF YOUNG MEN.

“And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly : and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he.”—1 Sam. ix, 2.

A FAVORED SON. Born into a good family ; he possessed a fine personal presence and superior abilities. He was raised to a high position without his seeking ; he had a great opportunity, but he proved a great failure. He was rash ; he could never wait. We have no knowledge that he ever prayed ; he was religious, but not obedient to God ; his abilities and his opportunities perished together. He made mistakes which could not be remedied.

There are young men now who are well born—born to rare privileges and large opportunities—who fail. They fail to reach their best possibilities ; they fail to meet the expectations of their friends ; they fail to achieve the



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character which they should possess; they fail to exert the influence upon others which they might; some of them miserably fail. They, too, make mistakes which lead to their Gilboa.

1. *It is a mistake in young men to regard their youth as of less importance than their later years.* There are many probations in human life; the greatest of these, however, is youth. Under normal conditions our manner of life in youth proximately determines the number of our years which follow. It decides whether we may expect substantial health to advanced years, or the sufferings of the invalid with life both enfeebled and cut short. It is in young manhood that the reputation is gained for honesty, truthfulness, and trustworthiness, which constitute the wealth of later years, or the name of being deceitful and unreliable, which is the poverty and disgrace of old age. Habits formed in early life are the most inveterate, and least likely to be abandoned in subsequent years. If there is value to life at all, supreme importance attaches itself to its earlier years.

2. *It is a sad mistake for young men to think they have no need of counsel from those*

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*older and more experienced than themselves.* In that period in which imagination is vivid, when passion is vehement, and habits of reflection are not strongly developed, it is easy for young men to rush into independence, to become impatient of restraint and to think themselves safe in their own keeping. Advice which is opposed to their ideas and inclinations is undervalued and often disregarded. They are sure that their way is the road to happiness. They do not appreciate the fact that those who have been over the same ground are better judges of its dangers than they. Time dispels their illusion, and either corrects their mistake or witnesses their ruin. It was the young man who thought himself wiser than his teachers; who, when his name and health were gone, and his bones were rotten with the sins of his youth, sent up a cry which might have rent the heavens: "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me."<sup>1</sup>

3. *Young men make a mistake when they indulge the habit of wasting.* The waste habit

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<sup>1</sup> Prov. v, 12, 13.

is easily contracted, but is never abandoned without difficulty. The habit has many forms; but when allowed in any one direction, it strongly inclines to indulgence in others. *The waste of money*, however small the sums, is a mistake; it is wrong. For a young man present waste generally means future want. Money wasted is money wanted somewhere, and no man has any right to spend it for that which does no good to himself or others. It is God's money, and should be used according to the will of the owner. *Waste of time* is a greater loss than that of money. Idleness is the bane of prosperity, temporal and spiritual. Hard work should be accepted as the merciful arrangement for us all. It is treason against ourselves and against society to attempt to escape it. To be trivially employed; to stand still, waiting for higher wages, or for something to turn up, is foolish and wicked waste. Socrates called every man idle who could be doing something better than he is doing. *Mental idleness* is, if possible, a worse form of waste than physical idleness. It is degrading to both body and mind. It is the opinion of some careful observers that the vice of licentiousness is emi-

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nently the sin of mental indolence. Young men who never study, who read nothing which costs them intellectual effort, who keep nothing on hand to think about, will have little grip on anything. Mental muscle grows by vigorous exercise.

4. *Chronic hurry is a common mistake with young men.* Their pulse is fiery, and they live in a fever. They eat in a hurry, work in a hurry, and conduct their sport in a hurry. As a result they digest poorly, seldom enjoy the things of every-day life, and never do their best at anything. In a hurry to get into business for themselves, they cut short their education; they can not take the time to go through college. They are in such haste to make money that they sacrifice their best opportunities of securing it, and lose what is worth more than money. They study in a hurry, and hence lessons superficially digested, still less assimilated, and least of all permanently retained. They marry in a hurry, and thus tempt some young women to act with equal haste, and deprive them for a lifetime of the well-rounded manhood which, in husbands, they need and perhaps deserve. The young man who hurriedly grasps

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at a present advantage or enjoyment, while sacrificing a more distant but less transient good, will never reach his best possibilities. He will die of hurry.

5. *A mistake which has often proved fatal to young men consists in pampering physical appetite.* Appetite is blind; it solicits, but never discriminates. Its movement is the same whether towards the innocent or the forbidden. We have an animal nature joined with a spiritual; rather, we are spiritual beings for a time connected with a brute nature. If the animal dominates the spiritual, degradation and ruin result. We were never made to be governed by appetite; that belongs to the brute. Here is a battle-ground for all men, but especially for those who are at that period in life in which appetite is sensitive to temptation, and in which the dangers of indulgence are not understood. Because of the deceitful pleasure connected with the use of alcoholic drinks and narcotics, their harmlessness is assumed. The lurking slavery which results is concealed. To be bound down by any form of bodily appetite is a degradation, against which young manhood should fight as for its honor and its life. Beer,

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wine, tobacco, and the whole brood of shortcuts to deceitful pleasure should be cast out as abominations, to be forever forsaken. The young man can not put off this struggle till he is older; the war is already upon him. To be a man, full and free, is a work so great that the whole life is needed for its accomplishment. "Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."<sup>2</sup>

6. *It is a mistake in any young man if he pretends to be what he is not.* The pretense is not honest, and it will be soon taken to be a false label placed upon inferior goods. If it taxes his nerve at the first, he must have the courage to be himself. He should speak with his own voice, and speak what he thinks. No man should be able to coax or bribe him into dishonesty concerning himself. He is weak the moment he ceases to be real. He is a fallen young man whenever he begins to adopt a life which he feels constrained to keep a secret from his friends. A double-lived man is a hypocrite, and the judgment-day is sure to overtake him before he dies. He will be strong if he is sincere. If he wavers and changes his

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii, 22.

course in different ways to avoid criticism, he will only increase his embarrassment. "To flee from the dog increases his bark."

7. *Young men make great mistakes in the choice of their associates.* They make equally great ones by failing to make any choice, and instead taking the first who offer themselves. Those who are most forward in offering companionship are not unfrequently the least desirable. A young man can not afford to keep himself to a low plane of association, just because he can thus be at the head. He must keep a sharp lookout for his own improvement. His most intimate companions should, if possible, be those whom he is compelled to look upon as his superiors. He needs them for the sake of the influence upon his own character. It is next to impossible to resist the miasmatic influences which exist in social life. He needs them for the sake of the estimate which others will place upon him because of his associates. He does not need the companionship of young men who spend a great deal of money. He is in no need of those who speak falsely, profanely, or vulgarly, nor of those whose manners and habits are such that he would not invite them

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to the society of his mother and sisters. He must not be the companion of those who drink or gamble, and he should shun, as he would a viper, the young man who is unclean in his lips or his life. He should keep the company of those who are brave enough to tell him his faults and warn him of his dangers. He should be as careful to avoid bad and unprofitable company in the books he reads, as in the men whom he meets. He should not judge of the quality in either case by the amusement which it offers; as well judge of the "worth of medicine by its taste."

8. *Young men make all mistakes in one when they venture into life without reference to God and religion.* To affect independence of the claims of God is as foolish as it is sinful. To treat the plans of God concerning us with indifference is the climax of recklessness. The young man who can waive away religion and the Bible and the Church with an air of self-sufficiency, predicts for himself the fortunes of a prodigal. He will meet temptations for which his strength will prove weakness. He will walk among pitfalls to escape which he will need the helping hands of Christians, and, above all,



a personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ. His boasts of sufficient strength to take care of himself reveal his greater danger.

The fatal mistake of the son of Kish was his having so little to do with God. He took counsel of his own heart; he thought he could better the plans of God in his own interest. As a result, that choice and goodly young man, the pride of his tribe and the hope of his country, ended his career in a chapter which wrung from his soul the despairing cry, "I am sore distressed, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams."<sup>3</sup> And it is still more sad to see young men now cast away the restraints of religion, and fail in the onsets of the world, the flesh and the devil. Then comes the closing chapter,—lives choked with the indestructible memories of lost opportunities and sinful deeds; hearts aching with secrets which must be kept from nearest friends; possibilities once near, now gone past and out of sight, and a vain cry to Heaven for help in carrying out selfish plans, in forming which God had never been consulted.

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<sup>3</sup>1 Sam. xxviii, 15.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—I Cor. x, 31.

"What is there to appal us, however deep and settled our habits of sin, if Christ has provided the means, and has undertaken to accomplish our full redemption from all iniquity?"—Asa Mahan.

"Is it possible to aim at doing our whole duty, while having no expectation that we are going to do it? And can we pray acceptably for grace to obey God in all things, and yet expect that we are not going to do it?"

"A man who has been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God should be pure. He who is an heir of life should be holy. He who is attended by celestial beings, and who is soon—he knows not how soon—to be translated to heaven, should be holy."—Albert Barnes.

"Men will contend long for their natural rights. This is the spring of much of the heroism which illumines the pages of history. Could we impress the whole Christian Church with the assurance that in the name of Jesus they have each an individual right to the undivided Comforter and Sanctifier, the Church would be suddenly transformed from a hospital to a band of conquering heroes."—Mile-Stone Papers.



## XII.

### CAN WE BE SAVED FROM COMMITTING SIN?

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.”—Matt. i, 21.

#### 1. *Can we be saved from committing sin?*

If we were to determine this question by the more common degree of expectation manifested by Christian people, we should be compelled to answer it in the negative. Very many at least appear to have no more idea of being saved from sinning than of being translated. This may be the result in part of erroneous notions concerning the nature of sin, and in part the effect of the teaching which they have received. But the question is not whether all God's children *are in fact* saved from the commission of sin, but *is it their privilege* in Christ Jesus thus to be saved? •

2. *Nor is the question to be settled by reference to the human will.* Whatever may be

the philosophical possibilities of human freedom, it remains practically certain that no man ever did, or ever will, overcome his tendencies and temptations to sin by mere force of will. It is not a question of the strength of one man, or of the weakness of another, nor of the inabilities of us all. The Bible never grounds our hope of salvation in our own strength. No power of will can assure us of salvation; no weakness of will can render our salvation impossible.

3. *Again, the question is not whether regeneration and sanctification may be so perfectly accomplished in us at any given time, that thereafter we are kept from committing sin by virtue of these divinely wrought states.* Regeneration signifies the *beginning of spiritual life*; sanctification the progressive and completed dominance of that life. For the continuance of regeneration or sanctification, the same is required which was demanded for its beginning. A regenerated soul is begotten of the Holy Spirit, and he continues regenerated by a continuous Divine begetting. Sanctification is not so much a work as a working. It is a *constant doing* of the Holy Spirit. The *state*

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keeps no one from sinning. The state is nothing apart from the continuous presence of the Spirit. The "cleansing from all unrighteousness"<sup>1</sup> is not a work of the Divine Spirit which He performs and then stops; if He stops His work the cleansing stops. Regeneration and sanctification exist no longer than the Holy Spirit continues to regenerate and sanctify.

Many Christian people appear to look at this subject much as Deists view the act of creation. The Deist maintains that God created the world, and that He put into it certain laws and forces by virtue of which it has run on of itself ever since. Christian Theists contend that God was no more in the world the day of its creation than He has been every moment since. Matter, and law, and force, are nothing apart from His constant working. Had He been less in creation since, than at the first, there would be no creation now.

So it would seem, not a few good people conceive of regeneration and sanctification after a Deistic idea. They think of them as works which the Holy Spirit performs, and then ceases to work in that specific way, having no

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 1, 9.

more to do in that particular line. As the result of these new endowments, believers go on in regeneration and sanctification by virtue of the work which the Holy Spirit has done. A better view is that regeneration and sanctification go on just as the Holy Spirit goes on regenerating and sanctifying. The states in themselves are nothing apart from Him. Regeneration as a state is the continued regenerating work of the Spirit, and a state of sanctification is the Holy Spirit continually sanctifying the believer. The error here is not merely philosophical; it is intensely practical. The wrong concept sets good men and women at work seeking a work—a state, instead of a Divine Person. As a result, struggle after struggle follows in efforts to hold on to a work done, instead of accepting the Eternal Doer.

4. *And the question is not whether Christians can be saved from making mistakes.* They do make mistakes, and will continue to make them to the end of their lives. They are liable to misjudgments concerning men, and books, and Christian doctrine. They may be in error in reference to the meaning of Bible passages, and even in the interpretation of re-

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ligious experiences. Whatever may be possible with God in the case, we have no assurance that, in this life, we shall be saved from misapprehensions and misconstructions of various kinds. And as we act and speak according to our judgments, we shall act and speak differently. While we may all become subjectively right, we shall all be more or less objectively wrong to life's end.

5. *The question is not whether Christians can ever reach a state in which it would be impossible for them to sin.* This was not the state of Adam in Paradise, nor that of the angels in heaven. It would not be a Christian state; it could not be a moral condition. The power to be holy and the power to sin are mutually inclusive. *They are the same power exercised in opposite directions.* With the possibility of sinning taken away from man, the possibility of becoming holy would also be destroyed, and moral character would to him be impossible. Fletcher says: "God's goodness consists in the perfect rectitude of His eternal will, and not in a want of power to do an act of injustice. And the devil's wickedness consists in the complete perverseness of his obstinate will, and not in a



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complete want of power to do what is right."<sup>2</sup> Man will forever be free, and forever responsible for his moral attitudes.

6. *The question then is simply this; are the provisions of the Gospel such that those who embrace them may reasonably expect to be kept from committing sin?* Have Christian believers good grounds for the faith that, through Jesus the Savior, they may reach a state of continued obedience to God? May they realize a life in which their wills steadily and uniformly harmonize with the will of God? Can Christians be permanently saved from known transgressions of the Divine law?

7. The answer to this question must come from the Word of God, and so clearly is the case there stated, that it seems surprising that a doubt has ever been raised concerning it. The notion that Christians must inevitably sin all their lives would appear to be an instance in which the provisions of the Gospel have been brought down in order to apologize for existing conditions among professed believers. When the Lord's Christ is presented in the New Testament as the Savior, it is as the Savior

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<sup>2</sup> Fletcher's Works, II, pp. 197, 198.

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from sin; not from some sin; not from the sin of some; not from sin some of the time, but *from sin*. So far as the ability of Jesus to save from sin is concerned, no limitations or exceptions are expressed. The salvation of the Gospel is everywhere salvation from sin without qualification. On what authority are these Divine provisions restricted?

8. *The salvation offered in the Gospel is offered to men in this life.* The selfishness of men has created a popular notion that salvation refers to future blessedness. To be saved, we have thought, means to escape hell and get to heaven. This is not the Gospel message. The salvation of the Gospel is here on earth. Jesus came to earth; Calvary and the cross were here; and all the wealth of eternal love is poured out upon the race in its world life. The Gospel is not like certain acts of Legislatures, to take effect after a specified time; it is in full force and effect now. It means this moment all it can ever mean. Salvation has only an indirect relation to another world. There is no hell possible for any soul who is united to Jesus Christ, and there is no heaven in the universe to him who rejects the only Savior. If salva-

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tion is in this world, it is salvation from sinning; its purpose is to bring the righteousness of God into the souls and lives of men.

9. *Life without committing sin is foreshadowed in the very nature of repentance.* We start into the Christian life by purposely turning from all known sin, and giving ourselves in willing obedience to God. If we purposed the abandonment of some forms of sin only, and if we intended but a partial obedience, our repentance would be "the sorrow of the world that worketh death."<sup>3</sup> We could never think of entering into covenant with God while any known sin was unrenounced, or any point of self-will not surrendered. But are we required to purpose that which we can never hope to realize? And if this be required of us, will its realization be necessarily withholden from us? If we ask the Heavenly Father for bread, will He give us a stone?<sup>4</sup>

10. *On no other subject are the promises of the New Testament more numerous or more specific.* They assure us that sin shall not have dominion over one who accepts Christ;<sup>5</sup> we are exhorted to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, but

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<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. vii, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xi, 9-13.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. vi, 14.

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alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;<sup>6</sup> we are told that what the law could not do, God, sending His Son, can do;<sup>7</sup> that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus;<sup>8</sup> that God will establish us and keep us from evil;<sup>9</sup> that our great High Priest is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him.<sup>10</sup> Can these promises mean less than that Jesus the Savior offers to save His people from committing sin? And yet the New Testament abounds in promises, assurances, exhortations, and prayers which contain the same practical meaning.

### REMARKS.

1. This subject appeals to Christians as a question of privilege. It is their calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is the "glorious gospel of Christ."<sup>11</sup>

2. Is not the absence of expectation on the part of professed Christians, that they can and shall reach a state of abiding obedience to God, a manifestation of unbelief? Does it not dishonor, and in a measure reject Christ? And does it not lead persons to regard sin as a mat-

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<sup>6</sup> Rom. vi, 11.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Thess. iii, 3,

<sup>7</sup> Rom. viii, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Heb. vii, 25.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. viii, 1.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Cor. iv, 4.

ter-of-course thing, causing little uneasiness or concern?

3. Is it not wrong to regard our temptations and trials, our weakness and unworthiness, as reasons for dismissing the expectation of permanently overcoming sin? This is not a question of circumstances, unfavorable or favorable. Weakness and unworthiness have no bearing in the case. It is a question of the ability of Christ as a Savior, and of our acceptance of Him as our all-sufficient keeper. He stands before us in the Gospel as the One Almighty Conqueror of sin. Conquering *for* us, He would conquer *in* us. "Who of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption?"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. i, 30.

"I have lost all, excepting what I have given away."  
—Mark Antony.

"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate."—1 Tim. vi, 18.

"What maintains one vice would bring up two children." "Buy what thou hast no need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessities."—Poor Richard.

A business man states that he was awakened to a sense of his duty in the use of his money by seeing the following item on his day-book: "To pug-terrier, \$10; to missionary cause, \$5."

"Almost all the parables of Christ, in their primary statement, bear upon the relation of men to their money, —the parable of the Talents, of the Prodigal Son, and of the Rich Man and Lazarus, as illustrations."—F. F. Emerson.

"There is something radically wrong in society when a woman spends three thousand dollars for a ring, as was the case recently in this city, and another was found starving in a hallway, with a dead infant in her arms."—Rev. Lyman Abbott.

A literary society offered a reward for the best definition of money, the author of the following receiving the prize: "Money, an article which may be used as a universal passport to any place but heaven; and is a universal provider of everything but happiness."

"It is a remarkable fact, that men should have agreed to apply the word *miser*, or miserable, to the man eminently addicted to the vice of covetousness, to him who loves his money with his whole heart and soul. Here, too, the moral instinct lying deep in all hearts has borne testimony to the tormenting nature of this vice, and the man who enslaves himself to his money is proclaimed, in our very language, to be a *miser*; that is, a *miserable man*."—Trench on the study of words.

### XIII.

#### CHRISTIANS AND MONEY.

“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to your trust the true riches?”—Luke xvi, 11.

A STEWARD was accused of unfaithfulness in handling his employer's money. When about to be called to an account, he adopted the device of cutting down bills receivable, thus cheating his master still further, and bribing his debtors to become his own friends. The fraud was exposed, but the proprietor, while discharging the servant for dishonesty, commended his practical foresight. He had managed so to use the funds as to secure his own advantage. He had made friends for the future. Jesus makes this one fact the lesson of the story. He says that Christians may use money in such a way as to gain friends in the eternal habitations. There is then a Christian use of money. In other words:



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### I. RELIGION HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH MONEY.

1. By money we mean, not merely our ordinary medium of exchange, but all forms of worldly possession, *the right use of which is as much a part of religion as prayer or church-going*. In the thought of some, worldly business and religion appear to be separate affairs. Money matters, they seem to think, belong to a department of life with which a man's religion has nothing to do. Religion with them consists in devotional exercises and reasonable attention to the Church, but money-getting, money-holding, and money-using belong to business, and are not to be counted in as an element in the religious life. That is, a man's religion may be all right, while his use of money is all wrong.

2. *Manifestly this is not the Bible view.* Under the Jewish dispensation, in which almost everything was governed by specific rules, every man's money was tithed for religious and benevolent purposes.<sup>1</sup> The people and the priests, the rich and the poor were alike re-

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxvii, 30, 32.

quired to bring the tenth of their products each year; this as a part of their religious obligations.<sup>2</sup> Before there was a written law upon this subject, Jacob promised to do this while praying for Divine guidance and protection.<sup>3</sup> He felt that to get into covenant with God he must pledge faithfulness in the use of his earthly possessions. And in later times the backsliding of the Jewish Church was marked by the fact that the whole nation had robbed God in the matter of tithes and offerings.<sup>4</sup> Even Old Testament religion had to do with the use of money.

3. *New Testament teaching is not less particular on this point.* It is true that there are fewer specific rules governing Christian duty in the New Testament than in the Old; more is left to enlightened conscience, and the application of the law of love. But this law of love itself requires that money must be gained, held, and used with reference to the honor of God and the highest well-being of man. It is put down as one of the principles of the kingdom of heaven, that no man can make money the supreme object of his pursuit, and at the same

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<sup>2</sup> Numb. xviii, 26-29.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxviii, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Mal. iii, 8-10.

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time be a servant of God.<sup>5</sup> While the possession of wealth, acquired by legitimate means, is not pronounced a sin, the holding of large estates is declared a hindrance to those who would seek the kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup> The fact was shown in the young man who had "great possessions," but who turned away from Christ when asked to devote his property to the good of others.<sup>7</sup> The three men whose everlasting ruin is plainly stated in the Gospels, lost their all in the misuse of their worldly possessions. One was a prosperous farmer, who hoarded his "much goods, laid up for many years," when he might have used them in ministrations of good to others.<sup>8</sup> Another lavished his money upon himself. He indulged in expensive dress and sumptuous banquets. His social gatherings were not only occasional; they were daily, and he left the poor to suffer at his gate.<sup>9</sup> Judas became so hungry for a little more money that he pilfered from the bag with which he was intrusted, and as his greed increased he struck a bargain with the Jewish priests by which he gained enough to buy a little more

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<sup>5</sup> Matt. vi, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xviii, 24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* xii, 16-20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* xvi, 19-31.

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land.<sup>10</sup> Poor fellow! he thought his bargain a sharp one. He was sure that Jesus would take care of Himself, and the fifteen dollars would be clear gain. His sin was not remarkable; it was simply getting money in a wrong way for the purpose of spending it for himself. The solemn emphasis which is placed upon these cases in the Gospel record indicates the views of our Lord concerning religion and money.

4. *That Christianity requires the gaining and using of money to be as religious as any other of our duties* is plain from the very nature of Christian consecration. In this we recognize God's right to all we call our own. We dedicate to His service all with which He has intrusted us. Were we to make an exception of our worldly goods, we should vitiate the whole transaction. We are as much pledged to use our money for Christ's cause, as we are our talents in any other direction. He who does not give his worldly possessions to God, really does not give himself to God. When Jesus told the rich young ruler that, to become His follower, he must use his money for the good of others, it was not so much that He

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<sup>10</sup>Matt. xxvi, 15.

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wanted the young man's money, as that He *wanted the man himself*. He could not get him while his money was withheld. The way in which money is used reveals where the heart is. We pay most readily for that which we prize most highly.

5. *There is no sin in getting money, provided it is done through honest methods, and with due regard to the interests of others.* Indeed, to gain in this way is a Christian duty. Nor is it a sin to possess money, if that possession is held with benevolent regard to the needs of others. Possession, in itself, is neither sinful nor virtuous. To possess money, or any other gift, in a way which prevents its usefulness, is a wrong to others. The value of any gift is not in its possession, but in its power of service.

And it is also true that the enjoyment derived from any talent is realized only in its usefulness. Men of means enjoy their riches only in their distribution. If they do not actually part with their wealth, they are mentally planning to do so, and they derive their enjoyment from what they in mind see of its uses. Unused riches bring no happiness to their pos-

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essor; "his heart taketh not rest in the night."<sup>11</sup>

6. *The Christian use of money requires that expenditures upon ourselves be as small as is consistent with, (1) health, (2) culture, (3) station in life, (4) the needs of those dependent upon us.* It forbids the use of money for the gratification of appetite, or taste, or for the multiplication of luxuries and conveniences, simply because we have it and call it our own. When we spend upon ourselves what would do more good if bestowed in other ways, we are not making a Christian use of money. We can easily have an unchristian number of wants. Our apparent necessities multiply with the means of satisfying them. They will not regulate themselves. We are wont to proceed upon the notion that our money is our own; we have worked hard for it; we have earned it, and it is ours to dispose of as we please. If we wish to buy conveniences and luxuries, whose business is it, since we have the wherewith to pay for them? We forget that what we call our money is really God's money, and that we are taking charge of it for Him. Besides, who are we and

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<sup>11</sup> Eccl. ii, 23.

what immense good have we done, that we have a right to secure for ourselves all the conveniences which our money will buy?

7. *Giving is eminently the Christian use of money.* It was the Lord Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."<sup>12</sup> To give from mere impulse, to give from the expectation of a remuneration, giving because others give, giving to excel others,—none of these are Christian reasons for giving. They lead to unwise and spasmodic giving, and put many a good cause to serious disadvantage. Christians should give as God gives—to bless others. They should give as the Lord prospers them, not as they may fancy He might prosper them. The poor have no right to refuse small gifts; the well-to-do should give larger ones. It is as sinful to be ashamed of giving little, as to be proud of contributing much. Paul held the early Church together by taking collections in his Gentile congregations for the Jewish Christians who were starving in the famine. We have no knowledge that any of his Churches dreaded the collection, or that any converted pagan ever thought a Sunday

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<sup>12</sup> Acts xx, 35.

## CHRISTIANS AND MONEY.

offering inconsistent with the devotional exercises of the day.

### REMARKS.

1. Money used according to Christian principles is among the most powerful instruments of good. It can be made a civilizing and Christianizing force anywhere in the world. No man in our time who would make his money a blessing can for a day lack opportunity. Used wrongly it is an equal power for evil. To have money is no trifling responsibility.

2. Money brings with it not a few dangers. We are inclined to self-gratification, and are often held back from some of its forms from inability to incur the expense. In the purchasing power of money all forms of self-indulgence come within our reach, and self-denial becomes difficult. "The lusts of other things" still choke the word till it becomes unfruitful.<sup>13</sup>

3. The conceded superiority which, in the popular mind, attaches itself to even moderate wealth, brings to its possessors an ensnaring pleasure. It may beget a feeling of self-consequence and self-sufficiency which is most detri-

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<sup>13</sup> Mark iv, 19.



mental to Christian life and influence. This is not true at all, but is sufficiently frequent to have led Paul to say, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches."<sup>14</sup>

4. Those who have much of this world are too generally contented with things as they are. It has been said that no great reform has ever been initiated by the wealthy class. Looking at their own abundance, they have been disposed to say, "Let well enough alone." It is difficult for persons in such a mental condition to realize deeply a sense of need.

5. Pastors and other Christian workers generally find it more difficult to reach men of large means, than those of the poorer classes. With most men wealth creates isolation and distance. It requires greater skill in approaching them, and greater courage to be faithful to them. They are not always as willing as others to receive the truth which searches the heart, and points out the unethical features of the life. They are more liable to become entangled in business projects which Christian principles can not justify, and as they are har-

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Tim. vi, 17.

## CHRISTIANS AND MONEY.

assed by innumerable tormenters they become unapproachable. They are probably subjects of less personal effort, for the purpose of leading them to Christ, than almost any other class. Both they and their spiritual guides are not a little in danger of falling into the error that, with rich people, "a very little religion will go a great way."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> T. DeWitt Talmage.



"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."—Gal. iii, 13.

"The person under the law serves that perchance he may be saved; the person under grace serves because he is saved. The person under law serves in order that God may forgive; the person under grace serves because God has forgiven. One works in order that he may become a son, the other works because he is a son. And there is as much difference between the two ways of living as between slavery and liberty, a burden and a blessing."—Studies in Hebrews.



## XIV

### UNDER THE LAW.

"But before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."—Gal. iii, 23.

It taxed the wisdom and patience of Paul to keep his Jewish converts from falling back into a reliance upon their old legal system. They felt that, in accepting Christ as all they needed, they were losing almost everything—their priests, their altars, and all their sacred rites. A class of Judaizing teachers arose who sought to enforce upon every young Christian the observance of Jewish rites. They kept upon Paul's track, and were often too successful in their efforts to unsettle the faith of the Gentile converts. They did their worst in Galatia. This fact is the key to the Epistle to the Galatians.

Paul met these false teachers with that one great fact, which means so much to the Church

of to-day; viz., that revelation is progressive; that the Mosaic economy was preparatory, and not final; that its externals had spiritual meanings which were realized in Christ, the Law was "a schoolmaster," it dealt with children; and that those who relied upon it as the way of salvation were rejecting Christ and remaining in bondage.<sup>1</sup>

The spirit of Judaism sometimes takes on a Christian form. There are Old Testament saints in New Testament times. It would not be difficult to name religious sects which, while bearing the Christian name, maintain peculiarities which are distinctively Jewish. They seek to revive Jewish ideas of the kingdom of God and of the reign of the Messiah. They would put the yoke of a Saturday Sabbath upon the necks of all Christian believers, and bid us hope for a heaven which is little more than a second edition of the land of Canaan. Still more to be regretted is the fact that the spirit of Jewish legalism often appears in the religious life of Christian people who have no sympathy with the externalism and literalism of modern Adventism. Converts do still fall back under the

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii, 24.

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law. Justified by faith, they seek to be made perfect by works. They fall from grace to law works now as in Paul's day, "it gendereth to bondage."<sup>2</sup> We note some characteristics of this religious state.

1. *These Christian legalists are relying upon themselves instead of trusting Christ.* They do not think this of themselves; they are right in theory upon the question, but they are really attempting to live Christian lives alone, and in their own strength. They say, "I am trying to be a Christian," "I mean to do as well as I can," "I am not going to give up the struggle." These expressions indicate that, instead of trusting in Christ and accepting Him as their life, their reliance is really upon their own strength.

2. *This class of believers are continually getting ready to believe in Christ, but do not quite believe in Him.* They are waiting till they do something more, or until God does something more, before they accept Christ as their own Savior. They are not quite ready; not good enough, or not bad enough, so they wait. *To wait for anything* before accepting

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<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv, 24.



Christ is a legal state of mind; such are under the law.

3. *The religion of those who are under the law consists largely in making good resolutions.* They resolve, and they promise God and themselves that they will be more faithful, but find themselves very little improved by the process. They make vows to resist temptation, as if there was some strength in a vow, but realize no victory over sin as a result. They try experiments with themselves. They hear this great man and that one; they read the books which are recommended to them; they try all which they know has been helpful to others, as invalids try different remedies of which they have heard, and thus postpone trust in Christ, and keep under the law.

4. *Christians who are in a legal state are generally actuated by fear* Like the man with one talent, they are "afraid."<sup>3</sup> They fear death; they fear the judgment-day; they fear for their eternal future. They stand in dread of God and of what He may do. They see in Him an almighty and righteous Sovereign, but they can not realize that He is a loving

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<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxv, 25.

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Father. They are at the mountain which burns "with blackness and darkness and tempest," but have not come to Mount Zion and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.<sup>4</sup> They are those who, "through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage."<sup>5</sup>

5. *To those in a legal state Christian duty is a task, rather than a delight.* They serve from fear, rather than from love. Their religion is a way of getting to heaven. They are often discouraged; they tire of religious duty. They wish there was some easier way to get to heaven. Conscience to them is rather a goad than a guide. As a result they are religious by spells; their fears are periodically awakened, but their interest as often subsides. They perishingly need to accept Jesus Christ just as they are, and treat the law as the rule of duty, not as the way of life for a sinner.

6. *Christians under the law, when conscious of having sinned, go away from Christ instead of coming at once to Him.* They think of their broken promises, and they have not the face to make any more. Their efforts to live right have so often failed that they are dis-

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<sup>4</sup>Heb. xii, 18-24.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* ii, 15.

heartened. If they dared, they would give it all up. They grieve in silence over their religious state, and for a time stop praying, for they are ashamed to meet the Lord. When they have worn off the sense of wrong-doing, they come back like a punished child, to try and do better.

7. *The legalist is not moved to labor for others.* He has so much trouble of his own that his heart can not go out towards others. He can not point out the way of faith to others, for he has not found it himself. He is alarmed when he discovers that others have experiences much richer than his own; they suggest to him fear and despair, rather than joyous expectation.

8. *It will not be strange if Christians in this legal state lower their standard of Christian life.* They will think the Sermon on the Mount impracticable. Some will alternate between strictness and laxness in the interpretation of Christian duty. The Pharisee and the Antinomian both come from the ranks of legalists. To be under the law is a state so joyless and dissatisfying, that those who have long felt

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its chills of despair are easily led to embrace any doctrine, or philosophy, or sophistry which promises them relief. Anything calling itself Christian, which makes little of sin and nothing of hell, and which tells them they are better than they have thought themselves to be, will easily make disciples of these tired-out souls, who pant for rest as the hart pants for the water brooks. Men will not forsake their religion if in it they realize intellectual and spiritual rest, but they will sit very loosely towards that which does not meet these great demands of their natures.

9. *Is there a way out of this harrowing legal state?* The answer is easy, and it is the old, old story of the Gospel. Receive Christ; receive Him now; receive Him without once thinking what He will do for you. Receive Him as having borne all your sins, as knowing all your difficulties, and as infinitely able and willing to do for you all you need. Receive Him, not as an experiment, but for time and eternity, whatever may or may not be the result. Receive Him as strength in place of your weakness; *as the very life of your life.*

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Receive Him perpetually, "Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."<sup>6</sup> "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Heb. vii, 16.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. x, 4.

“Hardness of heart is the natural consequence of the indulgence of sin. As the natural consequence of the cultivation of virtue, is virtue; of kindness, is kindness; of tenderness, is tenderness; so the natural consequence of the indulgence of sin is sin,—a sinful hardness of heart.”—Hodge’s Conference Papers.

“The case of Pharaoh is simply one picture out of thousands of the eternal struggle between the will of God and the will of man. Somewhere, at the parting of the ways, every soul comes to the same crisis, to that valley of decision where, in the mystery of choice, is sown the seed of character.”—The Beauty of Jesus.



## XV.

### HARDENING THE HEART.

"To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."—Psa. xcv, 7.

THIS ninety-fifth Psalm is a hymn which was sung in the public worship of the Hebrews. It thus often admonished the people of the fact that God is a speaking God; that He speaks to His worshipers, and that to hear His voice and not obey is a self-hardening process. It called to mind the great mistake of their forefathers, who for the period of forty years so frequently heard the voice of God, and yet so persistently disobeyed Him. They hardened their hearts; they were refused an entrance into the promised land; they were overthrown in the wilderness.

This warning will be timely and weighty so long as God speaks to men, and men disobey. The greatest peril of unsaved men is a hardened heart. The processes which pro-



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duce this are constantly going on with all who disobey God's voice. This instance of the self-hardened Israelites is again and again brought forward in the New Testament as warnings to all who hear the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

### I. NOTE SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH MEN HARDEN THEIR HEARTS.

1. *In general, it is by sinning against light.* Pharaoh was undisturbed till he heard the voice of Jehovah through Moses. It was those who saw God's works forty years whose hearts were fatally hardened. It was those who, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God, whose foolish heart was darkened, and whose doom is announced in the fact that "God gave them up." Upon the men of our own day the light of the age shines; the light of home and Church, and the light of a country filled with Bibles and churches. They can not reject the Gospel without hardening their hearts.

2. *Men harden their hearts by dishonesty with the truth.* They talk against that which they believe; they oppose truth which reproves them; they offer frivolous excuses as reasons

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<sup>1</sup>Matt. xiii, 14, 15; John xii, 40; Rom. xi, 8; Heb. iii, 12, xii, 25.

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why they are not Christians; they conceal or deny the convictions of sin which are sometimes upon them; they plead self-justification for their impenitence; they are uncandid in their attitude towards the Bible and the Church.

3. *All forms of vice harden the heart.* Intemperance and unchastity paralyze the moral sense. Vices associated with bodily appetite are specially deadening to the religious sensibility. Gambling, and all forms of business which involve cheating, deception, and wrongs against others, can not fail to harden the heart. The habits of scoffing, profane swearing, and of telling falsehoods are heart-hardening sins.

4. *Unfairness with Divine Providence results in hardness of heart.* Refusing to acknowledge the hand of God in providential privileges or reproofs. When men pass through seasons of deep affliction, and are the worse rather than better as the result; when they pass through times of religious awakening and remain impenitent, they will become harder than before. When they treat their ordinary religious privileges with neglect or indifference, they will wear out the influence of the means of grace and become hard.

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5. *When men fall into the habit of making promises, and of neglecting to fulfill them, they will grow hard of heart.* Unpaid vows; promises of future repentance not redeemed; promises to God and to friends, treated with indifference or ridicule,—these are processes which make the heart hard. Resolutions to reform, or to become Christian, often made and as often broken, are self-hardening in the extreme.

### REMARKS.

1. *The penalties of self-hardening are inevitable*, they begin with the sin itself. Indifference to the truth is a speedy result. If the truth be admitted, little is made of it. The fact of sin is admitted, but without a sense of personal condemnation. To a hardened heart the whole realm of spiritual reality seems distant or unreal.

2. *Spiritual darkness settles down upon a hardened heart.* A hard heart can not see, and general unbelief is the result. It puts light for darkness, and darkness for light.<sup>2</sup> Persons who have hardened their hearts are often ready to grasp at any passing delusion, as if it were

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<sup>2</sup> Isa. v, 2.

## HARDENING THE HEART.

truth. In this they may be sincere, but do not realize that their disobedience to God has prepared their minds for self-deception.

3. *One of the penalties of hardening the heart is false security.* As men grow hard they often fancy themselves to be not very bad, and even think themselves to be growing better. They resent the idea that they are lost; they regard their state as normal; any keen sense of need has passed away, and they conclude that the little measure of mercy which they require will get to them at some time and in some way. The fear to sin which they once had has faded away, and they easily make up their minds to take all the risk of dying as they are.

4. *An inevitable penalty of self-hardening is increased hardness.* This results in the nature of the case. The very means which God employs to induce obedience become the occasion of greater obstinacy. The measures which God employed to soften the heart of Pharaoh rendered him the more stubborn. The hardening of his heart is ten times ascribed to Pharaoh himself, ten times to God, and several times to the messages which Moses delivered. It is

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not ascribed to God until it had been several times ascribed to the unyielding monarch himself. Self-hardening was then followed by judicial hardening.

5. *Men are apt to think their dangers outside themselves.* They think of death, of a day of reckoning, and of a dark beyond; but their greatest dangers are in themselves. No other peril is to be compared with that which steals on upon every impenitent soul, more and more each day—a hardened heart. This is the danger which made Jesus weep over Jerusalem. This is the peril which might well make the cheek of every neglecter of the Gospel turn pale.

## XVI.

### EDUCATION IS THEISTIC.

“And ye shall know that I am the Lord.”—I Kings xx, 28.

THERE was war between Syria and Israel. A battle was fought among the hills of Ephraim, and Ben-hadad suffered a crushing defeat. A year later hostilities were renewed. The Syrian generals suggested to the king that their former failure was due to the interference of the gods. Accepting the views of their nation relative to the numbers and limited dominions of deities, they argued that the gods of the Israelites held sway among the hills, but that their own ruled in the low lands. They therefore advised fighting this time in the valleys where, by the help of the Syrian deities, they would be sure of success.

Now, Ahab, king of Israel, was not a man whom we should suppose God could consist-

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ently help. He was idolatrous; he had insulted Jehovah again and again, and had dragged the nation down to its lowest stage of moral corruption. And yet, on the eve of a decisive engagement, a prophet came and assured him that the morrow would bring to his arms a sweeping victory. This prophet was, however, particular to inform him that this success would not be achieved on his account. There was a higher reason. The Syrians had planned their campaign upon the assumption that the God of Israel, like their own gods, was local and limited in his dominion. On that assumed notion they had staked the issues of battle. It was more necessary for the good of the world to have that error refuted, than it was to have the wicked Ahab and his army overthrown. Had victory turned in favor of the Syrian hosts that day, it would have been regarded as confirming the notion that the Jehovah of Israel was God of the hills only. It was a false idea of God which was defeated that day; it was truth concerning God which won that field. Ben-hadad's council of war had challenged the universality and omnipotence of God, and the answer came back in a defeat which sent out this

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message to all the nations—and *ye shall know that I am the Lord.*

Nearly a hundred times we come upon this short sentence in our Old Testament Scriptures. Many hundreds of times we find its equivalent in meaning in both the Old Testament and the New. It is the key sentence which unlocks the mysteries of all history. Creation, miracles, the incarnation, days of grace and days of judgment, all have their explanation and meaning in the purpose to make men know the Living and Universal God. With this purpose Bible history coincides. The wonders of the Exodus were not merely the startling performances of Moses; they were not a trial of strength between a Hebrew shepherd and an Egyptian king; they were not alone the struggles for an emancipation of slaves. All these were but incidents of a higher controversy between the gods of Egyptian superstition and the Jehovah of the universe. The miraculous in this history ceases to be difficult of belief when we see its meaning in the oft recurring sentence, "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." For this purpose the sea was divided, the wilderness traversed, the tabernacle



and the temple were planned and constructed; for this, captivity overtook unfaithful Israel and Judah; for this, Jesus the Messiah came, suffered, and died. The purpose in this long record to disclose God to man makes history a science, and transforms the supernatural into the most majestic of the natural.

In the text-book of the universe, then, the fundamental lesson is this,—ye shall know that I am the Lord. And can that which God has made the leading lesson in the world's education be consistently or rightly ignored in our educational systems? If it be true that the universe is God's text-book, prepared on purpose to teach men this great truth, is it possible for us rightly to study the universe while we leave out of the account its fundamental design? It is our contention that education, in its highest and truest sense, is necessarily theistic. It joins with prophets in announcing as its basal theme that God is the Lord. It has a thousand voices, but they all unite in saying, "Understand us rightly, and you will know that God is the Lord."

1. Man has often been called a religious animal. He is a moral, as truly as he is an

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intellectual or a physical, being. He says, "I ought, and I ought not," even before he knows what he should or should not do. Men everywhere know there is right, and they know there is wrong, and however much they may differ as to the specific acts which these terms require or forbid, they never deny the fact of the moral distinction. Universally man recognizes his dependence upon a higher power. He prays before he can reason. He reproaches himself, and blames others for wrong-doing. He approves honesty, justice, and self-sacrifice, and just as spontaneously condemns tyranny, falsehood, and selfishness. He is a worshipping being. He will have either God or gods. His notions of Deity may be crude and degrading, but the fact of a supreme power is in his earliest thinking. He is nowhere found without religion. Altars and temples and priestly castes are among the unvarying facts of his history. Low as may sometimes be his religious thought, savage and revolting as may be his sacrificial rites, his barbarous immolations, his magical incantations; and even his graven images are the expressions of a religious nature which, though imprisoned in superstitions, yet refuses

to be suppressed. In various ways men recognize accountability. They intuitively dread the days of reckoning. Crime forever looks over its shoulder as if to catch sight of an avenging Nemesis, while conscious virtue gazes upward in expectation of the favor of heaven. Man expects to live forever. His tombs and cemeteries reveal his hope of immortality. His notions of future life may contain all the differences of individual and race development, but his hope or dread of another world reveals his expectation of future life. He may theorize himself into doubts, and for the moment pronounce the life to come a dream; but as often as he doubts, the vision will return to assert its reality, and overwhelm him with the conviction that death does not end all. No other beliefs are so tenacious of life as those which pertain to religion. For nothing besides will men suffer and sacrifice so willingly.

And what do these indisputable facts mean? They mean, first of all, that "with man religion is an everlasting reality."<sup>1</sup> It is as germane to his nature as the light to his eye or air to his lungs. Heaven and earth may pass away, but

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<sup>1</sup> Through Nature to God, page 191.

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so long as the human race continues, religion will not pass away. Here lies one of the reasons why infidelity always has been and always will prove a failure—it attacks the fundamental affirmations of man's nature. If every man upon earth were an atheist to-day, there would be believers in God to-morrow. All attempts to prove that these moral intuitions are the result of education or heredity have failed. They are among the original furnishings of the mind. They tell us that both man and his Maker are moral personalities, and they place man's moral nature as the supreme value of his being. Any system of education, therefore, which leaves this greatest endowment of the race without proper direction and cultivation, is at best a one-sided education, and any character which is formed without regard to moral values and obligations, is abnormal and out of harmony with truest life.

2. *If we turn from the moral nature of man to the system of nature as a whole*, we are led to the same conclusion; that education, to be symmetrical and self-consistent, must be theistic. The universe is rationally constituted; the evidences of reason are everywhere mani-

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fested. If this were not the case, rational beings could not understand it, and there could be no such thing as science. The study of nature consists in tracing out the processes of reason along which the universe has been and still is being constructed. It is thinking over again what has been thought out and written down in creation. The more fully nature is known, the more certain becomes the implication that the Divine Reason and Energy are the basal facts in all and through all. Nature is a work of art; shall the picture be studied without reference to the existence or skill of the artist? "All works of creation are, in the last analysis, the thoughts of God made objective."<sup>2</sup> "Nature," says Tayler Lewis, "is an invariable doing."<sup>3</sup> With this view of nature there can be no godless science, and to study or to teach nature with God ignored, is to stop both teacher and student before they reach its highest meaning. *The same is true of any particular branch of science.* History is not a dry chronicle of successive events; it is a profound philosophy. In the words of Dean Stanley, "Human history is no disjointed tale; it is a

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<sup>2</sup> Story of Creation, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Lange on Genesis, p. 144.

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regular development of epochs, one growing out of another, cause leading to effect, race following race, empire succeeding empire on a majestic plan, in which the Divine Economy is as deeply concerned as in the fate of the chosen people."<sup>4</sup> There are no isolated or unrelated events in history. The past contained the power and potency of the present; in the present lie the prophecies of the future. The general movement is upward towards higher ethical standards and better social conditions. Said Jonathan Edwards: "The new creation is more excellent than the old. So it ever is, that when God removes one thing to make way for another, the new excels the old."<sup>5</sup> Nothing is more self-determined than the volitions of men, and nothing is more certain than that a guiding intelligence rules and overrules them all. It is thus that history ceases to be a medley of conflicting happenings, and becomes both a science and a philosophy. George Bancroft has well said: "By comparing events with the great movement of humanity, historic truth may establish itself as a science, and the principles that govern human affairs, extending like a

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<sup>4</sup>Lect. on Hist. of Jewish Church, iii, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>Works, ii, 377.

path of light from century to century, become the highest demonstration of the superintending providence of God.”<sup>6</sup> Shall we say, then, that history can be studied and taught as it should be in a practical denial of its most fundamental fact? If that which distinguishes history as a philosophy from an inexplicable jumble of events is the element of intelligent plan and direction which it everywhere exhibits, to teach or to study it as the fateful outcome of blind forces, is to repudiate its most philosophical aspects; it is, like the Gentiles of old, to be carried away unto dumb idols. The Oxford historian already named declares that the first attempt to present history as a philosophy is found in the book of the prophet Daniel. And yet the only philosophy of history which this prophet teaches is in the facts that the Court of Heaven holds dominion in the affairs of men, and that the movement of all history is the coming of the Kingdom of God in the earth. The theistic conception of history, then, is that which renders it a science and a philosophy.

*And what shall we say of the natural sciences from this same point of view? The*

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<sup>6</sup> Hist. U. S. iii, 398, 399.

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heavens are the book which astronomers for thousands of years have been attempting to read. Such a degree of intelligence is required for the reading of this wondrous volume that our wise men of the west, who have spent their lives in observing the stars, have as yet scarcely learned their alphabet. But does the reading of a book demand a degree of intelligence which is not required for its writing? Was not the content of the book in thought before it was set up in the type of stellar worlds? If men find geometrical principles in the motions and orbits of the bodies, it is because geometry was thought out and applied before human thinking reached it. In the well-known saying of Plato, it is because "God continually geometrizes." The study itself would convey to us no knowledge whatever, if the laws of thought in man were not those in the mind of the Creator. In the light of this fact, the fundamental implications of science are theistic. Nature becomes a Divine Revelation—"the utterance of the Eternal Reason."<sup>7</sup> And shall we call that the highest type of education which calls upon the teacher and his pupils to halt at the very point

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<sup>7</sup> Heart of Christ, p. 465.



at which the secrets of nature are most adequately explained and most sublimely interpreted? We are not contending that science *demonstrates* the truths of theism, but we do insist that the imminent presence of the personal and living God in the system of nature is its logical implication, and that to stop at the threshold of nature's profoundest significance from the fear that education will be religious, is an imbecility of secularism from which may the merciful heavens forever save the lecture-rooms of our colleges and universities!

3. It is suggestive in this connection to take note of a few facts which are confessedly without explanation excepting upon the basis of theistic belief. For there are many facts, in themselves indisputable, for which our scientific and philosophical knowledge alone can give no account, but which admit of ready explanation upon the principles of Christian theism. We base our astronomical calculations upon the Newtonian theory of gravitation; viz., that bodies attract each other directly as their masses, and inversely as the squares of their distances. But here is the old problem, as yet

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scientifically unsolved—how can bodies thus attract and be attracted when distant from each other? That is, how can a body act where it is not? This was a stumbling-block to the Newtonians at the time the theory was announced. Some argued that a body can no more act *where* it is not, than it can act *when* it is not. And the problem remains. We still ask, what is attraction? What is gravitation? Its existence is undisputed. It is universal; it acts equally between all bodies; it can not be produced, nor can it be destroyed. It can be neither increased nor diminished by any intervening medium; it occupies no time in transmission, and always keeps to its invariable laws. It is unaffected by the physical conditions, or the chemical combinations of the attracting masses, and thus the way seems barred to an explanation of its nature. The world remains without any theory which satisfactorily answers this question, excepting the theory which is supplied by the doctrines of Christian theism.

If it be said that *gravitation is force*, no one disputes this, but the statement explains nothing. The question returns, *what is force?*

Here, too, our scientists are silent. "Force," says Professor Silliman, "*is the name of the unknown cause of known effects.*"<sup>8</sup>

A skeptical philosopher of high repute places the nature of force as one of the problems which are absolutely unconquerable.<sup>9</sup>

Now, gravitation and force are not unconquerable problems to believers in a Personal God. Gravitation is the perpetual going forth of the Divine energy. Like all of nature, it is God in the act of speaking. Gravitation is His continual doing. As Thomas Carlyle has so sublimely written: "Force, force, everywhere force. Illimitable whirlwind of force which envelops us. Everlasting whirlwind high as immensity; old as eternity; what is it? *It is the Almighty God.*"

This tells us what gravitation is; what force is. Christian theism fully explains how bodies, separated in space by incalculable distances, may mutually attract each other.

Now, it is an acknowledged principle in scientific reasoning, that that theory which best explains existing phenomena should be accepted as correct. In anti-theistic science these problems, as we have seen, have confessedly no ex-

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<sup>8</sup> Prin. of Science, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Dubois-Reymond.

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planation, while theism offers not merely the best explanation of the facts, but *the only theory* which does explain them. It has really no competing theory in this field of explanation. Why, then, should not education take in theism as an important feature of its teachings in the lines into which these great subjects fall? And why should the student be told to stop at this point of inexplicable mystery from the fear that another step would take him into the realm of religious thought? God never made the natural and the spiritual so unrelated that the lower can be adequately known, while the higher is utterly disregarded. And since both science and philosophy have written upon these great facts that which the Greeks inscribed upon the altar of an unknown God, theistic education stands up to declare, "God who made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, and giveth to all life and breath and all things, . . . Him declare we unto you, that ye should seek the Lord, if haply ye might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us, . . . for in Him we live and move and have our being."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Acts xvii, 23-28.

*Then, if we inquire after the origin of motion*, we are conducted into the presence of another problem which, on the grounds of anti-theistic science, we must abandon without the hope of a rational solution. If, at some period in the countless ages of the past, the matter of the universe was diffused through space and was at rest, how came the beginning of motion? Was it attraction of gravitation? We have already seen that gravitation with Divine energy counted out is but a word without a corresponding thought. Did the vast gaseous or vapory mass begin to roll? Why did it begin to roll? By the law of inertia it could not begin to roll itself, for motion is change which is always produced by a cause independent of the body moved. As a quaint reasoner has put the case: "It could not have begun to roll before it existed, for there was then nothing to roll, and it could not have begun to roll after it existed, for there was then nothing to roll it." In the supposed absence of the Divine Presence and energy, there is no sufficient ground for the beginning of motion. Motion implies power, and in the last analysis *all power is will-power*. If, then, science has anything to say

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concerning the origin of motion; indeed, if it has anything to say concerning beginnings or origins in nature, it has that much to say about God.

*Again, if we ask what and whence is life, no text-book save the Bible ventures to make answer.* It is quite easy to note differences between that which is living and that which is dead, but what is that subtle something which makes all the difference, and from what is it derived? The non-living on this planet was first; how then came the living from that which did not live? Can that which possesses no life in itself give life to another? There was a vast period during which there was no life on this earth of ours; it is now here in varied forms; whence came it? What started these living processes? Science finds life always derived from preceding life; it **knows** no form of life which is not begotten of the living. Men have labored long, and for some years they wrought expectantly in efforts to generate life in the non-living, but all such labor has proved unavailing. Spontaneous generation is discarded even as an hypothesis. Chemists have all known substances at their hands; but however

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skillful their combinations, they lack the life-giving fiat—"Let the waters bring forth." In vain have they sought the living among the dead.

It seems quite difficult or impossible so much as to frame a definition of life without admitting theistic implications. What does it avail to say that life is "vitalism," "vital force," or the "vital principle?" These mysterious terms may be the convenient apologies for learned ignorance, but they shed no light upon the question—what is life? It may not be difficult to set down certain properties which distinguish living matter, but this leaves the nature of life untouched. For some cause living substance can not be defined in terms of chemical composition. A teacher of wide fame has said: "The nature of the bond which holds these diverse substances together, and maintains the integrity and continuity of the life process,— this is the problem of life, and it is apparently as far from solution to-day as in the time of our fathers."<sup>11</sup> Aristotle applied his rare philosophical powers to the solution of this problem, and though he failed,

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<sup>11</sup> Dict. of Phil. ii. Art. Life.

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his failure was no greater than that of the speculations of our own time.

Here, then, is the universal admission that all life comes from preceding life, and that materialistic science is unable to account for its existence, or even to give it a name. To what conclusion do these facts point? Unmistakably to this, that rightly conceived, life does not inhere in *things*, but in a *Person*. That which science admits it does not know, the dear old Gospel long ago declared, "In Him was life,"<sup>12</sup> "I am the life,"<sup>13</sup> "By Him all things consist."<sup>14</sup> We are not to understand these Bible sentences as meaning that Christ *gives life* to the living; *He is the life of all that lives*. Not that He was the author of life at the moment of its beginning, and then left the process to go on without His continuous energy. He is the life the first moment, and equally the life at every succeeding moment. We do not mean that He is the author of the lower forms of life only, and that He then left the process to develop the higher without Him. *He is the life equally in the lowest, in the higher, and in the highest forms*. In His absence there could be no life

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<sup>12</sup> John i, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* xiv, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Col. i, 17.



in any form. Life is nothing apart from Him. Could we suppose the Creator to cease to exist, then all life would cease to be. From that moment not a flower would bloom, not a bird would sing, no lungs would breathe, no heart would throb; the universe would be a name for universal death. Thus, in searching after the secret of life, the very halt of philosophical analysis proclaims the fact of God as the necessary implication of its unanswered questions. In what science and philosophy know and teach, and in what they confess they do not know, we hear alike the fundamental principle of theism—ye shall know that I am the Lord. And it follows that the more complete our scientific knowledge, the more thorough our education, the more broadly and firmly is laid the foundation of theistic belief.

4. *No one will take exception to the statement that one of the chief objects sought in education is the making of worthy citizens of this great republic.* There would be little gain to the country or the world in an education which served only to sharpen the intellects of bad men. The schools must make men and women better as well as greater, or they will

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increase the ability of some to do the more mischief. It goes without dispute that the safety and perpetuity of our institutions depend not alone upon the intelligence, but quite as much upon the moral virtue of our people. Honesty, integrity, chastity, and all forms of righteousness are as essential to our welfare as scientific knowledge and polite learning. Every educational institution in the land should be a school in which morality of life is taught, and in which the best ethical standards are maintained. If colleges are to make leaders in society and in the State, they are bound, as far as possible, to make leaders whom it will be safe to follow. The school, jointly with the Church, is charged with the training of young men for the duties of citizens. It will determine largely the characters and lives of those who will teach our children. It will fix the ideals and types of life in our young people. It has in its hand that larger question as to what kind of fathers and mothers, husbands and wives shall be considered models for the nation. To our schools the whole country should be able to look for everything which is good, as well as for much that is great. Now, can all this be secured if

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God be ignored? Was Washington in error when he warned his countrymen that "virtue or morality is the necessary spring of popular government," and that "reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle?" These words were written at a time when a wave of infidelity was sweeping over the country; when "The Rights of Man" were being emphasized in denial of the rights of God. Washington saw the truth of what he stated, and the hundred years which have since elapsed have served to confirm the correctness of his view. Those who fear not God are, as a rule, wont to regard not man. Human morality and God are historically and logically connected. No power has proved sufficient to restrain the downward tendencies of human nature save man's hold on God and God's hold on man. If, then, morality is necessary to individual well-being, and if it is a condition of national safety, every institution of learning in the land should be a training-school in the science of the moral life. And that this training may be successful and permanent, God should be both assumed and acknowledged.

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5. Finally, we may add that education is necessarily either positively theistic or practically infidel. It is at least difficult to discover any middle ground between these two types of school influence. Really, there is no such thing as non-religious education, meaning by that term an education which neither accepts nor rejects theistic belief. Education tends toward belief or disbelief. The doctrine of God is in the air; it is introduced to every man and in many ways. No neutral position relative to it is possible. As in the olden time, Jesus Christ can say now, "He that is not with Me is against Me." The very silence which must be adopted in the effort to be non-religious is itself a voiced declaration that nothing of God belongs in education. It ignores, if it does not deny, the personal presence of the Immanent Creator. It practically says to students that in their education God is not worth thinking about. The notion that a truth, just because it may have religious bearings, must be dismissed from education as an outside and indifferent matter, can not be entertained without conveying prejudice against all religious truth. Under this type of teaching young people sometimes conceive the

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idea that their education is a little higher and more free from alloy if it is kept studiously distant from all religious thought. These harmful notions are but logical conclusions from the fundamental error that education can be just as high, just as thorough, just as complete with God ignored and counted out. We are not contending that our schools should be theological seminaries, or that creeds of Churches or the formulated doctrines of religion should enter into our college courses; but we do insist that to study nature in a purposed evasion of the very ground of the universe is untrue to education. As well might we shun the ocean in the study of life in the deep seas, and teach our astronomy with no word concerning gravitation. This, too, when some of the greatest philosophers of the age are spending their lives in studying the person and life of Jesus Christ. This, too, when culture and Christianity are walking side by side in closest fellowship. Nine-tenths of the colleges in America were founded by Christian men—founded in the name of Christ, and for the high purposes of Christian education. Subtract Jesus Christ from the thought of the age, and

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it would destroy the literature of the world. Jesus Christ is to-day at the head of all the progress of the twentieth century. He is the soul of its charities and the strength of its reforms. It is He who is lifting ethical standards the world around, and giving new forms of expression to the life of this wonderful age. To attempt to divorce education from Christ is to repeat the tragic blunder, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."<sup>15</sup> Education should be first among the knees that bow and the tongues that confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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<sup>15</sup>John i, 11.



